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Laurence Sterne: A Different Way of Approaching the Notion of Life in the Early Novel

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Abstract

This thesis employs the later philosophy of Michel Foucault to think through the unique set of socio-cultural problems that emerged alongside the early novel. I endeavor to explain the development of "biopower" and the concomitant (yet historically grounded) concept of a mass population in order to round off a nettlesome tendency among historicist rise-of-the-novel critics to focus on the creation of a bourgeois individual at this time. To that end, the texts of Anglo-Irish author Laurence Sterne bear out a unique narratorial response to biopower that begins with the 'body' of his work: i.e., Shandeism. Signaling the importance of the body through complex philosophical and material engagements with birth, life, and death throughout the eighteenth century, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-1767) responds to biopolitical institutions that exert power over the eponymous narrator. The family unit and obstetrics figure as important correlates of a power that takes hold of Tristram's life, and so the text's joy. In particular, I ask how the novel's notorious digressions are in fact a serious tactic employed against what Sterne sees as the deleterious consequences of a biopolitical society. We are left with a solemn reflection on how best to resist a government that regulates bodies and does not truly care for them. Sterne's answer? Laugh a lot.

Contents

Abbreviations

Laurence Sterne

TS	*The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. Penguin Books, 2003.
Sermons	*The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. University of Oxford.
ASJ	*A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*. Edited by Ian Jack and Tim Parnell, Oxford University Press, 2008.
JE	*Journal to Eliza*. In Jack and Parnell (eds.), 2008.
Letters	*The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne: Volume VII, The Letters Part I: 1739-1764*. Edited by Melvyn New and Peter de Voogd, University Press of Florida, 2009.

Michel Foucault

OT	*The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Vintage Books, 1994.
AK	*The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Pantheon Books, 1972.
DP	*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage Books, 1995.
SMD	*"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*. Picador, 2003.
STP	*Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*. Picador, 2004.
BB	*The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Picador, 2004.
PK	*Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. The Harvester Press, 1980.
AME	*Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, edited by James D. Faubion. The New Press, 1998.

I can suggest one thing. Search for what is good and strong and beautiful in your society and elaborate from there. Push outward. Always create from what you already have. Then you will know what to do.

–Michel Foucault[1]

[1] Jamin Raskin, "A Last Interview with French Philosopher Michel Foucault" (1984). Regarding the title of this study: in his final published text, Michel Foucault praised his former advisor Georges Canguilhem for proposing "a different way of approaching the notion of life" (AME 477).

1. Introduction

> I Wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly consider'd how much depended upon what they were then doing;—that not only the production of a rational Being was concern'd in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind;—and, for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost:——Had they duly weighed and considered all this, and proceeded accordingly,——I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that, in which the reader is likely to see me.[2]

Much has been made of Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-1767), a shaggy-dog story and sometimes autobiography detailing the affairs of a family so eccentric in its amusements that the eponymous narrator is compelled to span nine serial volumes grasping for an explanation. Horace Walpole was plainly unimpressed by the novel's author, who, having taken priest's orders more than twenty years prior to publishing the bawdy work in question, "was a little turned before, now topsyturvy with his success and fame" (431). Indeed, for a short period during the 1760s Sterne was "the most fashionable author in England" (Ross 11; Bosch 12). The "topsyturvy" celebrity to which Walpole and contemporary critics cast a begrudging eye also appears to invoke the controversial, often ethical discussion about Sterne's digressive style or idiosyncratic typography. Frankly, Sterne was not to capitulate to his culture's imperative of politeness: improprieties abound as do narrative 'halts,' from an entirely black page memorializing Yorick (*TS* 31) to the "chasm of ten pages" removed from volume 4 (282). It was clear enough that the author drew inspiration from a tradition of learned-wit satire beginning with François Rabelais, whose Pantagruelism is a model for what Tristram christens *Shandeism* (Hawley, "Enlightenment knowledge" 42), and extending to London literary society with Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope. But it was just as if not more apparent that

[2] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, edited by Melvyn New and Joan New (Penguin Books, 2003) p. 6. Hereafter, I refer to the novel as *Tristram Shandy* in the body and *TS* in parentheses.

Sterne responded to prominent novelists including Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding, at a time, no less, when the novel rose to generic prominence. The vogue for Tristram's life and opinions—his author had "converted many unto Shandeism" (*Letters* 242)—relied on a "systematic exploitation" of the epistemological assumptions at work in the writing and publishing of novels during this time (Keymer 17). Sterne is ever the moralist, though, and feigns as pure ribaldry what is usually a formal aberration attached to a prescription: laugh a lot.

Part-satirical, but rendered in fully novelistic terms, Sterne's masterpiece remains a slippery text in early novel studies that even seems "too capricious and ironic to be assimilated to a consistent thesis about the emerging genre" (17). What I think this "thesis" could be, despite Thomas Keymer's well-taken recommendation, is firmly rooted in birth, life, and death throughout the novel, which are concepts often cited in Sterne studies but as marginal to its primarily historicist inquiries. Neither of the recent anthologies dedicated to his work (Keymer, ed. 2011; New, De Voogd, and Hawley, eds. 2015) include a study of life, perhaps because it is so front and center in all of Sterne. One easily remembers the inattention of Elizabeth and Walter Shandy to the act of conceiving their second son, Tristram, having not "duly consider'd how much depended upon what they were then doing" (*TS* 6). The anxious "Wish" that opens the novel results from an interruption in their routine sexual intercourse, the simple mistake of which threatens to bring misfortune upon Tristram for the rest of his life. Sterne's writing concerns itself not only with studious digression but also the integration of a much larger story about predestination in medical theory into the lumbering descriptions that drive forward the plot.

It is no wonder that *Tristram Shandy* is a famously difficult book to begin, and not for the reader. For a majority of the novel's events we are left in suspense as to when Tristram will be born, which, in the meantime, amounts to digression after digression about his mother's

preference for midwives; his father's locutions about politics; his uncle's obsession with military architecture; and his delivering doctor's similarly gung-ho misuse of new obstetric technology. And after all, neither can the excerpt that leads into this introduction be a true beginning if "The Author's Preface" comes halfway through the third volume (174-182). In light of the generic blend of satire and novel, Tristram here construes a corresponding relationship between wit and judgement as two knobs stuck into gimlet holes, bound together in a way that one requires the other. He uses the analogy to satirize authorial prefaces that accompany eighteenth-century novels: "Bless us!—what noble work we should make! … with what raptures would you sit and read,——but oh!——'tis too much,——I am sick,——I faint away deliciously at the thoughts of it!——'tis more than nature can bear!——lay hold of me,—I am giddy,—I am stone blind,——I'm dying" (175). It is not as if Tristram constantly speaks in aposiopetic phrases, but the cadence with which he narrates his satire recurs enough to befit the name 'Shandy': a Yorkshire dialect word for "crack-brained or wild" (Hawley, "Enlightenment knowledge" 42). Pick any passage from *Tristram Shandy*'s allusive register, and the reader will find the giddy crux of the work. And yet, just as often, the narrative will return to the detrimental moment of conception.

In that way, Sterne also hopes the reader will notice feints within his satire that indicate health (above, "I am sick"; I am dying").[3] This study focuses on a vital problematic that is intricately and intimately interwoven into Sterne's prose: when Tristram links the body and body of work. The most well-known examples of a strict conceptualization of the body in *Tristram*

[3] Sterne was sick with tuberculosis ever since attending Cambridge University in 1733, when he "bled the bed full" after a severe hemorrhage in his lungs (qtd. in Ross 6). Arguably, the linked publications of *A Sentimental Joruney in France and Italy* (1768) and *Journal to Eliza* (1767) proffer extended evidence of Sterne's illness, which is embedded in both texts by way of the Yorick persona (the same who had apparently died from consumption in *Tristram Shandy* [31]). Sterne in fact had travelled to France on several occasions with the hope of recovering his health (Battestin 18), which he recalls in the fictional journals to real-life counterpart Elizabeth Draper. From May 29th and 30th: "[C]onfined to my bed—so emaciated, and unlike what I was, I could scarse be angry with thee Eliza, if thou Coulds not remember me, did heaven send me across thy way—Alas! poor Yorick!" (*JE* 123).

Shandy include forceps crushing the narrator's nose and a window circumcising his penis; but if the opening grievance detailing the malformation of his body is any indication, something—albeit unknown—impinges on the healthy life of characters and the straightforward nature of characterization. I see the novel not as a slapdash narrative that only has fun at the expense of previous novelists but as a seriocomic rumination on the confrontation of life with emerging political forms that make of bodies a rationalized collective, therefore, without circumscribed rights. The main executors of such a "biopolitics" of life so happen to be the family and obstetrics, which make up a preponderance of discussion topics in the novel and account for its digressive style. To be sure, Tristram declares that "unforeseen stoppages" will only increase over the time of writing, making it so that he will try "to go on leisurely, writing and publishing two volumes of my life every year … [which] I shall continue to do as long as I live" (35).

That one's life should coterminate with their writing brings us closer to a working "thesis" about the novel as an emerging genre, which is demonstrated by Sterne to include highly mediated responses to synchronously emerging forms of "bio-power" (as per Foucault). In the context of *Tristram Shandy*, he requires a model of life that responds to infirmities caused either by internal ravages or, more so, external pressures that increasingly become the standard in English society. Had not Sterne employed the spirit of Shandeism, he "would else, just now lay down and die—die——and yet, in half an hour's time … I shall be as merry as a monkey, and as mischievous too, and forget it all" (*Letters* 196). The linked themes of birth, life, and death, let alone their formal features in Sterne's work, betray much more than is supposed upon a cursory reading even of the novel's opening lines. So is Shandeism doing for the body what Sterne does for the novel: the very belief infuses enough wit and laughter to prevent power's hold over life.

1.1 Sterne, the Early Novel, and Biopower

To begin to discuss an author like Sterne necessarily demands that we likewise discuss the so-called 'rise of the novel.' The disputed expression describes a period of time in eighteenth-century England during which the novel supposedly developed; it also represents the considerable effort of scholarship since that time to extract from the inchoate form its provenances. Starting with Ian Watt's (1957) namesake study, recent[4] efforts to contextualize the early novel share a markedly historicist slant. The current study responds to and builds on a particular slice of historicist rise-of-the-novel criticism, which so happens to comprise the most distinguished works of the field: a 1980s which saw the publication of several studies indebted to the work of social theorist Michel Foucault.[5] I have chosen scholarship that applies Foucauldian discourse analysis to the early novel precisely because its representative scholars shaped the field, but in a way that was necessarily incomplete. To my knowledge, no studies utilize the theories of the 'later' Foucault to think through the unique set of socio-cultural problems that emerged alongside the early novel. I endeavor to explain the development of "biopower" and the concomitant (yet historically grounded) concept of a mass *population* as a way to round off the nettlesome critical tendency to focus on the creation of a bourgeois *individual* at this time. To that end, the works of Anglo-Irish author Laurence Sterne (esp. *TS*) bear out a unique response to biopower that constitutes a body of narratorial resistance: Shandeism. I demonstrate that Sterne's

[4] With the exception of Watt, theories before the 1980s nearly all adhered to a type of formalism. Several influential studies in the 1980s and 1990s, after a wave of historicism, began to leverage feminist and/or post-colonialist criticism. Respectively, see Judith Kegan Gardiner, "The First English Novel: Aphra Behn's *Love Letters*, The Canon, and Women's Tastes" (*Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 8, 1985) 201-222; and Felicity A. Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

[5] This study, which examines the oeuvre of a single author in light of Foucault's conceptualization of biopolitics, contrasts with those studies that have applied the 'earlier' Foucault to the emerging novel-form: Lennard J. Davis (1983), John Bender (1987), and Nancy Armstrong (1990). For a more strictly dialectical revision of Watt, see Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

body of work inscribes a formal definition of characters' bodies according to happiness, as if a reaction against what he sees as the deleterious consequences of a biopolitical society.

Revisiting this peculiar era of birth, of both the novel and biopolitics, the current study extends the scope of discourse-analytic criticism of the early novel to include *Tristram Shandy*. It also pushes the province of Sterne studies to consider its eponymous author beyond his eclectic or, as has been the case more recently, commonplace writing form.[6] Likewise, if we are critically to examine a post-2000s return to formalism in eighteenth-century novel studies,[7] we must be willing to outline the alternative usefulness of a Foucauldian "genealogy of power" with respect to biopolitics. For it is difficult to believe that a genre with such specific regimes of description and with unprecedented promises of truth (Davis) speaks only to a definition of selfhood that derives from bourgeois individualism. During the eighteenth century, the differences that marked privilege were just as well bodily. Juliet McMaster (2004) persuasively reads eighteenth-century authors' increasing attention to discourses on the body as a way of catering to readers who, informed by contemporary psychology, were trained by and sought out gesture, physiognomy, and expression. *Tristram Shandy* is shown to be uniquely "illegible," in that the strong relation between mind and body in eighteenth-century thought comes up against the novel's idiosyncratic circumlocutions. Indeed, for Sterne, "The body is not taken for granted, as it may be for pages or chapters together in some fiction. It is insistently *there*" (McMaster 27). But insofar as the body is so embedded in the fabric of Sterne's texts, it is not thereby indissolubly linked, as McMaster

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[6] Viktor Shklovsky famously argued that "*Tristram Shandy* is the most typical novel in world literature" (170). This ultimate sentence in Shklovsky's essay is often read as a playful remark with some truth behind it, if only to endorse his formalism. For the assertion that Sterne's sermons are typical, see Melvyn New (ed.), *The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne, Vol. 4* (University Press of Florida, 1996); and Tim Parnell, "*The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*: the commonplace and the rhetoric of the heart," *The Cambridge Companion to Laurence Sterne*, edited by Thomas Keymer (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009), 68.

[7] As a primary example of new formalism, see Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Novel Beginnings: Experiments in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (Yale University Press, 2006) p. 26.

alleges, to physicality (33). *A Sentimental Journey* is less formally frustrated but no less insistent on a physical body attached to a soul. So to speak, there is no inside to Sterne's 'body' of work.

Such a tendency to read the early novel in terms of the particular, the individual, or even the body itself is endemic to rise-of-the novel criticism. John Richetti (1998) is convinced by the "particularized presence" (1) the novel-form espouses in its middle-class readers; others, who comprise the bulk of this study, examine more subtle individualistic technologies such as news (Davis), confinement (Bender), and domesticity (Armstrong). One wonders if the historical precedent of enlightenment individualism forecloses on a more complete articulation of power relations at this time. Even the most comprehensive accounts of eighteenth-century history (Langford) and novelism (McKeon, "Origins") stress the rise of middle class consciousness. Correspondingly, McMaster's comprehensive study of individual affect explains only one aspect of the body at this time. Genealogies of power are *also* histories of the body; but by virtue of its position in a power relationship, Foucault shows, that body is almost always regulated. As proof, Tristram's antipathy for new obstetric technologies reflects this encroachment of medico-administrative knowledge as power over the body. It is thus tempting to apply Foucault's oft-cited motto, "Where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, *HS* 95), since a character like Mrs. Shandy can bargain with and open out a given set of force relations. For is not Dr. Slop's "obstetrick hand" (Sterne, *TS* 128) in her body akin to Mr. B's singular authority over Pamela?

No, indeed; to assess Sterne's oeuvre as a site of resistance is to confront undoable layers of irony and casuistry. Instead I suggest we think of the Sternean body as a materially 'conductive' form of identity: one unequivocally affected by something outside it. As Arnold I. Davidson proposes, we can read the power-resistance dynamic in conjunction with what Foucault calls the "immediate and founding correlation between conduct and counter-conduct"

(Foucault, *STP* 196). That this 'later' formulation adds an ethical component to the notion of resistance is also crucial for Sterne, who, perhaps by vocation, never envisioned counter-conductive literature without the moralistic admonishment of inattentive readers. In the very space of a novel's pages, counter-conduct creates "the possibility for others to 'enrich their life by modifying their own scheme of relations,' with the effect that 'unforeseen lines of force will be formed'" (Davidson qtd. in Foucault, *STP* xxix). What is vexing about *Tristram Shandy*—though to a lesser extent Sterne's other works—is that most of the text is a satire of the faculty of logical reasoning. Hence a critical preoccupation with so many forms of signification and their formal instability. Christopher Fanning, for one, laid out the novel's social spaces by means of its "manipulation of space on the page" (432), but he did not for all that clarify from where their power is enacted. Sometimes Sterne scholars are quick to match their author's stylistic quirks; thus abstracted from *Tristram Shandy*'s plot, we are left to believe, with its narrator, that any comments about actual events in the novel are bent on "satisfying the impatience of our concupiscence" (*TS* 53). In his opinion, a poor reader will allow subtle remarks of intellectual and moral understanding to "fly off," where they are no longer attached to meaning.

It is rather clear to me that Sterne's plots do have a 'point,' then, which converges around the merriment of the reader as a function of bodily autonomy. Whatever "unforeseen lines of force" can be interpreted from his "kingdom of hearty laughing subjects" (*TS* 303) implies the reciprocal formation of power *as conducting*: power that conducts individuals as much as individuals conduct themselves. I do not wish to invoke Foucault's notion of "governmentality" so much as historicize the claim that eighteenth-century English government involved more than just state politics. *Tristram Shandy*'s chronology begins with the Glorious Revolution for a

reason, not simply, as other scholars have noted,[8] because of the novel's vested interest in military history, but because the joint investiture of William III and Mary II represents a fundamental split in the way power would develop over the next century.[9] Although war is a way for rulers to consolidate their power, the Nine Years' War might equally have led to a loss of control and the growth of private interests (Brewer 111). Subsequently, Hanoverian monarchs could not claim the same type of power as Charles II, or even James II, had. Enlightenment's beacon in England was to herald a series of socio-economic and -cultural transformations that dispersed knowledge to local centers of power: to name several, "urban renewal; the establishment of hospitals, schools, factories and prisons; the acceleration of communications; the spread of newspapers, commercial outlets, and consumer behaviour; the marketing of new merchandise and cultural services" (Porter, "Enlightenment" 14). Suffice to say, if eighteenth-century novelists depicted the rather individualizing effects of such local centers, they must also have aestheticized discourses related to their residual constitution as sovereign power.

By this I mean something very specific. Michael McKeon speaks of a structural opposition between public and private, which witnesses "a progressive detachment of the normatively absolute from its presumed locale in royal absolutism and its experimental relocation in 'the people'" ("Secret History" xxii). In so doing, McKeon leaves open the non-

[8] See Visser 496; Melvyn New and Joan New in *TS* 620.

[9] England's Glorious Revolution is a famous crux for historians. The so-called Whig interpretation, which saw the revolution as a constitutional milestone on the path to religious freedoms and property rights, was for centuries dominant until phased out by twentieth-century Marxist historiography. While attempts to revise the Whig interpretation had been made earlier (notably by Edmund Burke), it was not until Christopher Hill's *The English Revolution* (1940) that the watershed event came under scrutiny. Yet, a number of studies since the revolution's tercentenary in 1988 have sought to reject Whig and Marxist interpretations in pursuit of uncovering what were less glorious revolutions in Scotland and Ireland. This increasing attention paid to a 'global event' led Julian Hoppit (2000) to claim that England's "frequently predatory commercial empire" and "social and geographical mobility" (2) were effects of post-revolutionary dependence on economic growth. That Parliament became a regular part of government after the accession of William and Mary suggests that monarchs could control only so much of the legislature (44). Recent revisionists such as Steve Pincus (2009) further argue that the Glorious Revolution constitutes an ideological break with the past and the creation of a new State bent on modernization.

exterior character of power after it finally does "relocate." Just after the mid-eighteenth century, Sterne's protagonists epitomize less a structural opposition between public and private and more an immanent relation of government and life. Government is a power that 'conducts,' that—in a quite older definition—"puts on a path" (Foucault, *STP* 121) in the same way as *pasearse* ("to take a walk") is for Spinoza an immanent cause. To 'conduct oneself,' as a phrase, can be justly interpreted under this Spinozistic framework as a non-exterior expression of the self-same power of government to be responsible *for* people's conduct. How I conduct myself is categorically different than the proper conduct I need to follow, but both will take the same shape when power is involved. Necessarily the conduct-counter-conduct relation is an action, like *pasearse*, that "is impossible to distinguish the agent from the patient (who walks what?)" (Agamben, "Absolute Immanence" 165). Resistance movements are just that: movements, which along this path are characterized by an aspiration to a different type of conduct. It is important to visualize counter-conduct and conduct as a related series of elements "that can be utilized and reutilized, reimplanted, reinserted, taken up in the direction of reinforcing a certain mode of conduct or of creating and recreating a type of counter-conduct" (Davidson 6). Let us not be afraid to ask in what ways the early novel is just so implicated. When Mr. B totally violates Pamela, her recourse is not entirely heroic as it is a modification of enforced conduct (see Leiman); and when government impinges on Tristram or Yorick, their recourse is not entirely individualized as it is a modification of formal conventions. The plasticity of both narrative progression and rhetorical arguments to be "reinserted" functions in the former to reinforce conduct and in the latter to recreate counter-conduct. Read this way, the novel is less a dialectic and more a strategy.

That 'government' has a wider semantic domain than state politics informs the type of counter-conduct the Sternean narrative is engaged in: something often so quotidian as walking

on a path, but which is nevertheless complicated by a seemingly infinite series of digressions. One need only read the most important passage of Sterne's ethics, in which Tristram states that "[d]igressions, incontestably, are the sun-shine" (64), to comprehend a connection between such formal resistance and embodied sentiment, notably merriment. Christopher Ricks's description of the world of *Tristram Shandy* as "delightful topsy-turvydom" (qtd. in Sterne, *TS* xi) is apt, if not because Sterne's oeuvre progresses based on vicissitude, then because its inscribed domain ("sun-shine"; "delight") immunizes itself from Parliament's emerging interest in the conduct and especially health of British subjects. The immanent relation between conduct and counter-conduct bears out a central theme: Shandeism is as much about the regulated body as it is about its field of possibility. Characters and readers are imagined as aspiring to "incontestable" life, which is thus to ask an important question of the eighteenth-century scholar. Injured, ill, and consequently doomed, Sternean protagonists act as if the politicization of 'living' during the eighteenth century is about the individual *and* their role in Britain's systemic devolution of power. Sterne's novels do seem, even uniquely, to consider life "without edges or shading," as Foucault has put it; "life withdraws into the enigma of a force inaccessible in its essence; apprehendable only in the efforts it makes here and there to manifest and maintain itself" (*OT* 273). What is this power that "maintains" life? That asks the subject to do the same?

In answering this dual question, we can begin to conceptualize a shift in sovereign power and its implicit premises in the 'rise of the novel.' My brief illustration of governmental conduct and bodily counter-conduct shows that Sterne, among other eighteenth-century novelists, will have fortified or frustrated discourses related to a fundamental split in power dating back to the Glorious Revolution; the question then becomes how such a split in power and a resulting dispersal of knowledge continue to constitute sovereign power, rather than all at once relocate it

to "the people" (McKeon). For although British Enlightenment is often associated with the specific brand of individualism found in Lockean philosophy,[10] cultural politeness, and economic commercialism (Porter 70), concurrent developments in natural philosophy, reproductive biology, and obstetrics came to define corresponding forms of political authority. Lisa Forman Cody contends that the "Whig narrative of an emergent, disembodied, rational public sphere as the central expression of eighteenth-century politics" (6) misses a key point about the scrutiny of the body that informed Georgians' conception of identity. In his several works about social control and scrutinization, Foucault began to develop a type of discourse analysis[11] that would later become the basis of his lectures on "biopower," Cody's foci being exemplary instances. The novel would reach new heights of popularity at the same time, but its status as a codified genre was very much still unstable. Richetti has said that "[t]he novel is part of the process of adapting older social structures to emerging modern conditions" (7), and to a corresponding degree Sterne imbues *Tristram Shandy*'s ironically visionary political and medical theories with anachronism. What these "modern conditions" are, indeed, amounts to differing interpretations of major authors, and even then Sterne's work is anomalous by comparison; the permeability he attributes to the novel's form—organization and shape—gives us the first clue.

Biopower lies at the heart of the current analysis. It is a sweeping, but no less critically focused attempt to describe a transformation in the mechanisms of sovereign power during the

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[10] For criticism that reconciles Lockean 'association' with Shandean 'digression,' or concerning the Volume II reference to "*Locke*'s Essay upon the Human Understanding" (*TS* 77), see Arthur H. Cash and Peter M. Briggs. For a recent view, see Keenleyside 125-131.

[11] It is well known that Foucault employed two general methods for the study of discourse: archaeology and genealogy. While they are not opposed, he prioritized genealogy as a mode of analysis in his later work on biopower. According to Kendall and Wickham, genealogy can be distinguished from archaeology in that it "describes statements but with an emphasis on power"; "introduces power through a 'history of the present' concerned with 'disreputable origins and unpalatable functions'"; "describes statements as an ongoing process, rather than as a snapshot of the web of discourse"; and "concentrates on the strategic use of archaeology to answer problems about the present" (quoted and adapted from 33-34).

late seventeenth century and throughout the course of the eighteenth century. Foucault's earlier characterization of life as "apprehendable" more fully appears in his conceptualization of biopower's "hold"—as Campbell and Sitze point out, in grip and understanding (15)—over life. This dividing principle, the emergence of life in political processes where before it, like animals, had only being, is teased out in what Foucault presents as a simple dichotomy. On the one hand, the sovereign used to have "the right to *take* life or *let* live" (*HS* 136); so to speak, it was thanks to the king that subjects were considered by right to be alive, let alone dead if they committed a punishable crime. On the other hand, the old right of the sovereign was replaced by "the power to 'make' live and 'let' die" (*SMD* 241); what is at issue, now, is a biopower that maintains life, and perhaps lets it die gently, through a series of "forecasts, statistical estimates and overall measures" (246). If we were to compare briefly the semantic composition of the simple dichotomy, we would immediately see the rubric of each power: the first exercises its total force as a function of a subtractive "take life" *or* "let live," whereas the second enacts its polysemous address as a function of an additive "'make' live" *and* "'let' die." The quotations that Foucault adds to these latter terms stand to suggest a certain ambiguity about biopower—which counterintuitively fosters life—but more importantly represent the "generality" (246) at which it is situated. Generality, as such, is the distinguishing factor of two forms of biopower, a discipline of the individual body (surveillance, hierarchies, inspections) and a regulation of the species body (birth rate, mortality rate, longevity, and even subtle systems as insurance).

Emerging in the second half of the eighteenth century, regulation is the topic of Foucault's subsequent lectures as well as, I argue, Sterne's contemporary writings. In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault clarifies the extent to which sovereign power is still manifest in biopower. At first he describes how the disciplinary "grid of sovereignty" addressed spatial,

economic, and administrative functions (14-15).[12] The regulatory grid of sovereignty is slightly different. It is characteristic of the sovereign's need to preside over nature—his "perceptual intrication of a geographical, climactic, and physical milieu with the human species" (23), that is, his dominion now faded into the definition and maintenance of life at the most general level. Even the disciplinary grid, of which prison is a principal example, was a categorical augmentation of sovereign power; further though, the regulatory grid effectively modifies the notion of life to mean something 'made' natural in relation to an artificial power: "the set of mechanisms that, for the government and those who govern, attach pertinence to quite specific phenomena that are not exactly individual phenomena" (66). On this framing, Foucault is able to argue that during the eighteenth century, individualism runs parallel to not only a commercial public but also a statistical population. The population is a productive category associated with mercantilism and, later, capitalism, but it furthermore presents a new way to establish a norm. Returning to the simple dichotomy, whereas before the sovereign was the sole arbiter of proper conduct (doubtless a pure right to "let live"), the introduction of probability measures as applied to a mass population now normalizes sickness and health, to perfect homeostasis if possible.

For this reason the health of the population, as opposed to any one individual, is coterminous with governmental conduct. In the mid-eighteenth century, leading philanthropists rationalized their ventures "by evoking the effect of population on the wealth of nations" (Cody 19-20). Unsurprisingly their charities were centered around reproductive health. Populationism, as a type of interventionism, sought to 'make healthy' the lives of pregnant women and infants so that their bodies could be used as labor for the nation (18). Supporters of the Foundling Hospital stressed that Britain's key to supremacy over Spanish and French empires was its

[12] Often associated with police presence and even the later construction of penitentiaries (Bender 167), Henry Fielding's work fits such an interpretation. For a discussion of body politic in Fielding, see Dodsworth 440.

growing population, and no less did their efforts filter in to a discourse among Enlightenment philosophers about maternity as a way to hold nations together. Furthermore, Thomas Robert Malthus's *An Essay on Population* (1798) portrays the population in a negative light, its government endorsement quickly degrading the influence of population-enhancing philanthropies. In response to a general fear of overpopulation, Britain's emphasis on female reproduction and sexuality as a point of demographic control did not cease. Taking matters into its own hands, Parliament blamed philanthropies for an increasing poor population and passed laws that made it easier for man-midwives to assert their objective authority (Cody 271-276). In the period between Sterne's writing and Malthus's enormously influential publication, British government more completely patented a biopolitical project over and against its subjects.

If anything, then, an analysis of Laurence Sterne's works should include the epistemological shift from "subjective, personal authority" to "objective, scientific authority" (Cody 23), not only as a result of surface changes in medicine but also as a real effect of how Parliament began to qualify life according to its general health. Historicist criticism will justifiably relate his use of medical theory and sources ranging from Robert Burton to Robert Whytt[13]; that is presumably the historical ground for Foucault's understanding of biopower. But bearing in mind "specific phenomena that are not exactly individual phenomena," the conceptual ground is perhaps even richer because it concerns Tristram's characteristically specific accidents—and not individual anatomies—as measured by the population's probabilistic norm. If

[13] Hawley ("Anatomy") notes that *Tristram Shandy*'s extensive allusion to both ancient and modern medical techniques plays into the liveliness of his text. Indeed, Sterne is not particular about differentiating sources; Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, a literary-medical text, and Robert Whytt's contemporary vitalistic theory are treated (and plagiarized) just the same. For a study that links medical theory with narrative structure, see Landers 401; with characters, see Mottolese 680.

sovereign power is no longer about domination, the population, as such, has a unique relationship to regulation that is not attributable to obedience or resistance. Foucault says:

> If we restrict ourselves to the sovereign-subject relationship, the limit of the law is the subject's disobedience; it is the "no" with which the subject opposes the sovereign. But when it is a question of the relationship between government and population, then the limit of the sovereign's or government's decision is by no means necessarily the refusal of the people to whom the decision is addressed. (*STP* 71)

This provides for an entirely new and "pertinent space within which and regarding which one must act" (75). Sterne's gesture toward a multiple body in his characters is to be distinguished from the Richardsonian novel, which, albeit just as complex, amounts to a yes-no power dynamic. By the mid-eighteenth century, novels outline the precarity and possibility of life.

As much as biopower fosters life through a series of discomfiting, even violent, discourses, it necessarily opens up a space for resistance. The early novel is often conceived as adhering in form to the development of self-consciousness (an assuredly Lockean term), but for a moment—and always an interruptive moment—Sterne makes us think otherwise. By means of ironic progression, formal digression, and bodily transgression, the Sternean text is a primary example of eighteenth-century literature's concurrent aestheticization of biopolitical discourses. I do not find it a propitious interpretation of literature that locates resistance *in* acts of resistance; we find instead at the border of life's essential continuity (*OT* 273) with every kind of structure in the world a form of counter-conduct. Just as the sovereign's injunction to obey no longer tames the population, a character's power over another will not always tell us the information needed about a power relationship. Individual forms of counter-conduct, be it as trifling as Trim's flourish (*TS* 550), will modify a given set of force relations in a way that power has to respond. It will be more favorable to think of Sterne's canon as a body, a "bodily gesture" (Davidson 29), whose vital importance is interwoven with a salutary recourse to happiness.

Sterne's use of happiness is by no means peculiar, but it is perhaps more "insistently *there*" than it is in works by contemporary novelists. This claim is a complicated one. Foucault duly states in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* that "[t]he 'right' to life, to one's body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs, and beyond all the oppressions or 'alienations,'… was the political response to all these new procedures of power which did not derive … from the traditional right of sovereignty" (145). Here the concern is that Sterne's promotion of bodily autonomy is, rather than a direct response to biopower, a mere reflection of the coincidental "political response." The Sterne scholar may be inclined either to conflate the two arguments, and claim that what he is doing is in fact commonplace, or to reject the author's adherence to any one of these introjective rights, and claim that what he is doing is eclectic if not unique. Because this line of inquiry has yet to be tread, though, I want to suggest we abandon the incongruity of the two, fairly popular ways to think about Sterne's narration. For example, Walter is an unreliable purveyor of political commonplace, so much so that it is preferable to start somewhere simple: the body. Sterne's own body, body of work, and characters' bodies amount to a "grounded theory" in which examining basic social facts allows the researcher to develop a theory consistent with what they observe (Esterberg 7). Therefore, a working genealogy of biopower accords events not to what is inside that body but to the social milieu in which it is situated: or, returning to Foucault's words, "an indefinite field of immanence which, on the one hand, links him, in the form of dependence, to a series of accidents, and, on the other, links him, in the form of production, to the advantage of others" (*BB* 277).

Of course, the term "accidents" is fitting. It recalls population technologies, Tristram's own "pitiful adventures and cross accidents" (*TS* 11), and Yorick's attention to the "force of accidents" (*ASJ* 49). Accidents remind characters that something bigger than them is also

indistinctly near to their own movements and desires. Conceivably, this immanent entry of life into citizenship adds nuance to the critical discussion of Sterne's famous opening lines. Scholars have applied 'the use of accidents' to *Tristram Shandy*'s formal structure, arguing that if the narrative is not structured *by* its haphazard presentation of events, then it is internally evident of the deliberate ordering of those events (Booth 466). While the claim to "composed variety" (De Voogd 281) is beyond the scope of this study, why exactly Sterne uses digression outside a formal or aesthetic context remains, I think, an unsolved question that is nonetheless political in nature. Joshua Reynolds, a painter for whom Sterne sat, could well have said the following about *Tristram Shandy*: "He seems to invert the very order of his discourse" (281); but, accompanying De Voogd's assessment, this vertiginous style also has something to do with reclaiming life. If not it would be more curious that Tristram, had his parents been more attentive during sexual intercourse, "should have made a quite different figure in the world" (*TS* 5). As I discuss in the coda, no account of Tristram's life is complete without an explanation of the "vile cough" that beleaguers Sterne's health and accounts for his inclination to protect bodily expression.

Melvyn New, Peter De Voogd, and Judith Hawley note that interdisciplinary studies predominate the current generation of Sterne criticism (xiv). It is perhaps timely, in more than one way, that we should evaluate Sterne at the intersection of literary and biopolitical theory. If by the end of this analysis one can more easily say 'Sterne's biopolitics,' it should likely be neither positive nor negative. For in between comforting merriment and biting satire, where irony resides, there are several hints at the vital importance of bodily health. I want for us to think very seriously about what it means that Sterne laments the encounter of simple life's "beautiful day" (Aristotle qtd. in Agamben, "Homo Sacer" 13) with the mechanisms broadly outlined above. Tristram says the following with a guileless spontaneity that is odd compared to

his usual digressions: "[W]as it not that my OPINIONS will be the death of me, I perceive I shall lead a fine life of it out of this self-same life of mine; or, in other words, shall lead a couple of fine lives together" (*TS* 257). It seems to be tautology. And yet, this seriocomic rumination links up biological and biographical life against a power that, in general terms, wants them split according to a scheme of difference. The clause, "Was it not … will be the death of me," is grammatically jumbled to such an extent that Tristram is certain that even in a yet unreal condition death "will" happen. Such an aporic admission inevitably comes to mean a contestation over his life. We will soon set off, as Tristram does: "*ab Ovo*" (8), keeping fully in mind that the complete phrase from Horace is *ab ovo usque ad mala*: from the eggs to the apples.

1.2 Literature Review

The notion that novels not only develop out of social conditions associated with a particular time and place, but also abet the reinforcement of ideologies "implicated in the foundation of something unlovely" (Warner 187) has its roots in 1980s rise-of-the-novel criticism. Foucault's assessment of the cultural assumptions that underlay historical developments in biology, economics, and linguistics[14] encouraged scholars to ask in what ways literature constituted a similarly unique field of knowledge. Among the influential contributions of Foucauldian discourse analysis is an understanding of the "power-knowledge relations" that appear to impinge on the body. Foucault indicates "that these relations go right down to the

[14] Foucault (1970) distinguishes between epistemology and what he calls "archaeology." In the foreword to the English edition of *The Order of Things*, he explains that his project seeks to understand the totality of scientific discourses rather than (though not in spite of) the intellectual biographies of scientists. "I should like to know whether the subjects responsible for scientific discourse are not determined in their situation, their function, their perceptive capacity, and their practical possibilities by conditions that dominate and even overwhelm them" (xiv). This aspect of Foucault's work gripped literary scholars; what if the author was also so "determined"? The same scholars also draw from *Discipline and Punish*, in which Foucault explains the emergence of penal discipline and eventually mass imprisonment as a function of new forms of selfhood. Following his methodology, critics evaluated various institutions for answers to the cultural problems typically, even newly, espoused in novels.

depths of society, that they are not localized in the relations between the state and its citizens" (*DP* 27). In direct response, Lennard J. Davis turned to news reportage, John Bender to penitentiary prisons, and Nancy Armstrong to the home in order to tease out fiction's role in the formation and control of eighteenth-century subjects. How we read novels of this period is shaped in large part by these studies. Yet, can the recent publication in English of Foucault's lectures on biopolitics enhance our readings of power and resistance—of conduct and counter-conduct—in the early novel? Relating scholarship that tells the story of the novel-form as one of "social power," I want briefly to acknowledge the possibility of different uses for a Foucauldian methodology, of which the relative neglect of Laurence Sterne in such discussions is evidence.

Davis (1983) was the first to apply a discourse analysis of power to the early novel. Davis's central claims follow from an initial concern with criticism that discusses the eighteenth-century novel as a generic reaction to previous fictional forms, such as romance. It is at strict odds with Watt that *Factual Fictions* declares its remit the novel "as a discourse for reinforcing particular ideologies" whose specious origins are actually "tied to particular power relations" (9). This approach locates novelistic discourse apart from England's economic restructuring and toward something more 'particular': sixteenth-century "novels," or printed news ballads. The often double-sided nature of *newes* at this time, toeing an ambivalent line between quotidian and supernatural accounts (50), meant that readers would not have been able to differentiate between fact and fiction. According to Davis, only in the mid-seventeenth century did news and novels become mutually exclusive categories reflecting advances in printing that were ideologically meaningful. These categories were further distinguished at the turn of the eighteenth century, when a flurry of laws aimed at establishing the veracity of libelous prose changed printing

practices, narrative structures and, more gradually, cultural attitudes toward facticity. Based on these premises, Davis can say that novels produced rather than reproduced ideology (222).

Going a step further, Bender (1987) will assert that eighteenth-century narrative literature enabled "the conception and construction of actual penitentiary prisons" (1). Though similarly dissatisfied with reflectionist models of literature, which regard the text as a 'reflection' of cultural processes, he proposes that we look beyond the legal sphere for ways that early novelistic representations produce self-conscious behaviors and structure penal systems in like manner. Literature at this time is unique, essentially, because it is a synchronic encasement of "feeling" that determines which cultural values will be available in the future. Here the ambivalence between fact and fiction is framed as an epistemological problem for which empiricists needed a way to verify, even 'master,' material circumstances; otherwise, reality was simply a fiction. Jeremy Bentham's particular stake in wanting to reshape penology's theretofore "fictional construction" (36) into more realistic and individual punishment furnishes the link to narrators' same role in novel-writing. One role of the narrator in constructing actual penitentiaries was to depict what a new prison system might look like, at least as envisioned by contemporary reformers. Daniel Defoe's representation of confinement, John Gay's disesteem of old prisons, William Hogarth's flirtation with reform, Henry Fielding's role in authority: these privileged instances make for the argument that narratorial-cum-architectonic forms gradually influenced what is commonly known as the eighteenth-century turn to self-consciousness (210).

For all that, neither Davis nor Bender saw fit to extend Watt's contention that this period's abandonment of classical idealism for rationalist philosophy outlined the unique trait of "formal realism" by which the rising novel-form became true to individual experience (Watt 13). Their focus lay instead with novels as a sort of repository that makes power relations

"transparent" to the modern individual.[15] Armstrong (1987) takes a similar approach in her germinal work on domestic fiction, which she maintains 'produced' an individual "who was first and foremost a woman" (8). The development of a female field of knowledge through novels, conduct books, and educational treatises comprehended a new sense of self and desire for others, beyond even what is attributed to contemporary epistemological debates (14). Such literatures presumed the domestic role of women by making female characters desirable to their prosperous male counterparts; writers began to represent women according to a "domestic ideal," and in a way that, Armstrong wants to say, allowed for the correlative rise of England's middle class. At first, the virtues of the new woman found in conduct books and educational treatises authorized a whole "set of economic practices that directly countered what were supposed to be seen as the excesses of a decadent aristocracy" (73). But the frugal economy of women's labor belied their 'depth'—one could educate a woman to pursue intellectual and polite activities—a gendered idea which laid the groundwork for Richardson's *Pamela*. Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, then, the novel would become a female form of moral authority against a previously male form of economic authority. Armstrong examines self-representation in Richardson, self-discovery in Jane Austen, and monstrous identity in Victorian fiction in order to show why writers began to represent the psychological complexity of the individual (255), and that this individual's pathology derived from a history of sexuality that began with domesticity.

What Davis, Bender, and Armstrong give us is a specific type of historicism. To them, the novel has no distinct origin but can be explained by a variety of contemporary texts which

[15] According to William Beatty Warner, "transparent literary history" appears in Bender's and Armstrong's work as both a methodology and a real phenomenon they see appearing in the early novel. On the one hand, each scholar seeks to expose the "false transparency" by which novels act as a guise for generative constructs such as the penitentiary or home; on the other hand transparency implies a tendency of the author to shape "a novel's characters, scenes, and language into a certain ideological formation, which in turn becomes the instrument and vehicle to carry certain effects into the world of readers" (Warner 192).

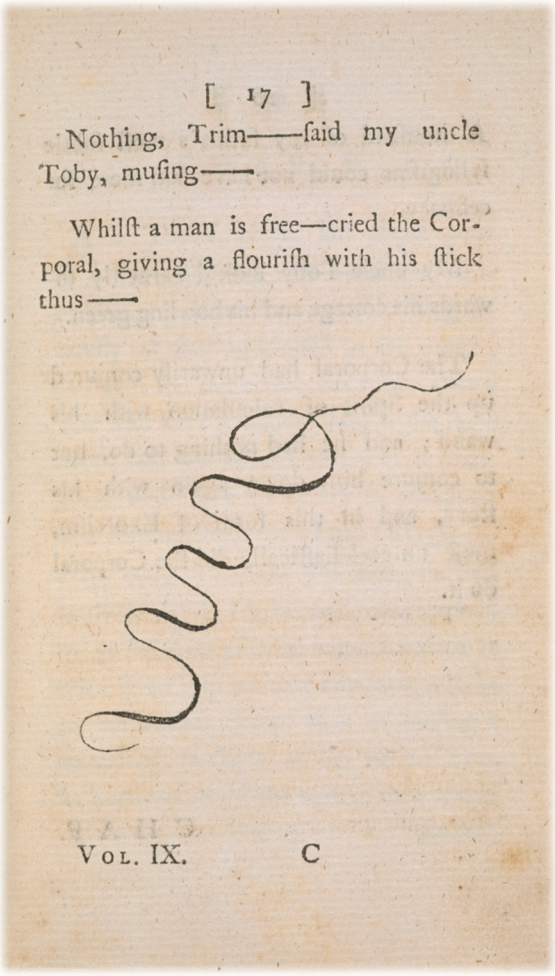
outline their productive capacity: it makes up, in Foucault's terms, a discursive formation whose conditions of existence are "also of coexistence, maintenance, modification, and disappearance" (*AK* 38). These critics' different revisions of the 'rise of the novel' together conclude that novels are vehicles of conditioning and ideology, which in "sporadic" (Armstrong 161) ways come to produce the modern individual. In the 1996 edition of *Factual Fictions*, Davis adds that his main arguments have not been seriously disputed; of his interlocutors, too, this has remained the case. For one, William Beatty Warner had questioned their tendency to "[see] power as mystified by social practice yet transparent enough to be critiqued" (Seager 72). But I think if one should leverage a methodological argument against historicist rise-of-the-novel criticism, it would not be found in the novel's social power per se. Rather, Davis, Bender, and Armstrong appear inconsistently to employ Foucault's conceptualization of power-knowledge relations, which is often yet imprecisely thought to be synonymous with the Marxist notion of ideology. From the outset Davis claims to apply "a special kind of historical materialism" (9); Bender an "ongoing process of cultural construction"; and Armstrong a new female ideal, which criticizes Foucault for failing to mention "ideology or the collective activities that resisted it" (22). Although we can imagine several rebuttals to the theories found in Foucault's early work, it is perhaps more appropriate to recall that his academic context led him to pursue, in spite of Marxist theory, a counter-history; hence the framing of power-knowledge as a special kind of discourse that acts not "as the activated remnants of an ideology" but "as the present correlative of a certain technology of power over the body" (*DP* 29). The problem with conceiving of the novel in ideological terms is that it attenuates the reality of its supposedly complicit deployment. If eighteenth-century novels *did* produce systematic power over the newly modern subject, then it is my argument that the immanent relation of governmental conduct and bodily counter-conduct

is the physical site of its regulation, not domination. Sterne's 'body' of work allows us to approach the novel from yet another angle, this time in a more faithful interpretation of Foucault.

A genealogy of biopower does not, however, limit its analysis to the physical body. Critics have already paid the topic ample attention; McMaster's exquisite study of the body's significations in *Tristram Shandy* and Hawley's compact piece regarding its anatomy offer several sources and implications for medical theory in Sterne. What I propose to add to this discussion, and to early novel studies more broadly, follows from the work of the above historicist critics to attach the novel to some sort of powerful referent. For example, if we take McMaster's claim that Walter Shandy "envisages childbirth as a masculine affair" (40), then there need be a biopolitical sense in which the body "may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved" (Foucault, *DP* 136). Why need this be the case? Sterne's illustrative argument for retaining the midwife, Roy Porter notes, "goes well beyond satire against prating doctors and medical pedantry. He was uncommonly sensitive to the conundrum of embodiment" ("Flesh" 294). Porter goes on to say that *Tristram Shandy* was "the first novel to bear the weight of a major philosophical shift" (304), reinforcing an understanding of Sterne's novel as almost uniquely situated to ponder more than self-consciousness (*Pamela*'s particularization of form would be more suitable). "Embodiment" may concern Shklovsky's famous claim about Tristram laying bare the formal device (147), but it just as well bears the import of forming ('em-') bodies; in tow, form is no less than a textual entryway for biopower into the novel.

This is also opposed to typical historicist interpretations of the rise of the novel, in that Sterne characterizes the body pursuant to its transformed relationship with the sovereign instead of only with its economic class or virtues. Consequently, the medical practice of attending to the individual body is simultaneously if not more frequently incorporated into the state's politics of

care. At that point, the "major philosophical shift" to which Porter refers distributed 'enlightened' knowledge so that the study of life, beyond biology, concerned the collective growth and health of a population (Mitchell 418-419). Institutions concerned with "improved" bodies bear out in the Shandys' obsession with the infant's health, Tristram's subsequent illness—which must resemble Sterne—and death's premature encroachment. Somehow Tristram attempts to reclaim the pieces of his scattered life, making his 'life and opinions' more than a satire of the author's literary forebears: it is the resistance of a body (of work) to what may come.


[17]

Nothing, Trim——ſaid my uncle Toby, muſing——

Whilſt a man is free—cried the Corporal, giving a flouriſh with his ſtick thus——

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Figure 1 (British Library; appears in *TS* 550)

2. *Tristram Shandy* and Incontestable Life

To envision what is meant by a transformation in the terms Britons used to talk about life that is distinct from news, confinement, or domesticity, we would do well to consider Sterne's critique of John Locke. In Tristram's earlier quote, "this self-same life of mine" is both a striking reflection and satire of Lockean philosophy as it is found in *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) and *Second Treatise of Government* (1689). Using a novel theory of property, Locke attempts in both works to split life into first-person consciousness and the living body. Thus a legacy of scholarship attending to personhood in *Tristram Shandy*, with the recent exception of Heather Keenleyside, has largely sought to separate the protagonist's frenetic biographical life (first-person consciousness) from his injured biological life (the living body). Doing so allows one to say with familiar ease that the novel operates according to singularity, that Shandeism is about "realising the play of consciousness … described as a form of *diversion*" (Parker 211); thereby treating consciousness as an enlightened activity that dominates "incontrollable facts" (Spacks 134), narration is severed from its potential as an inscribed act of resistance. While at points Tristram will call attention to the difference between biographical and biological life, we find evidence as early as the first chapter of Sterne's laying out a program for their originary connection. This retention of life in its "animal" form (Keenleyside 18), in its pre-biopolitical form, is directly opposed to the individualism of Locke's popular philosophy.

Tristram begins his autobiography with an account of his botched conception in order to "go on tracing every thing in it … *ab Ovo*" (8). Shirking Horace's recommendation that any good story starts *in medias res* ("into the middle of things"), that is, he intends to tell his own "from the egg." In part Sterne is referring to the commonplace idea linking a child's future to the conditions of their conception (New and New, *TS* 599), but it is also the case that whatever

misfortunes befall Tristram after Mrs. Shandy interrupts his father during coition at once shape the viability of the narrative. A comparable passage in volume four elaborates on the context for which *ab Ovo* is a thematic and structuring device: "[W]rite as I will, and rush as I may into the middle of things, as *Horace* advises, —I shall never overtake myself" (257). What in this statement feels to be a separation of biographical and biological life, in that Tristram's writing will never be able to "overtake" or catch up to his body as it ages, assumes a more nuanced and opposite tendency following an examination of his true objective in outfoxing Horace's counsel.

To be sure, Sterne permits himself no unrelieved progression without reminding us that the health of his protagonist *and* narrative depend upon the first act of conception (Hawley, "Anatomy" 478). Though Horace had praised Homer, who "hasteth on vnto the happes, the hearer hée doth drawe / Into the thickst, & lets [him] tast, as he the whole did know" (trans. Drant), Sterne never allows the reader to stop and "tast[e]" what he himself does not even know to be the "whole" of the novel's events. From his dissatisfaction with rushing—put simply, with being told what to do—comes a patience for bodily twists and turns, such that "I shall never overtake myself" is one formalization among many that require narrative never to outstrip embodied experience. It is telling that this avowal should come in the paragraph immediately following Tristram's aspiration to "lead a couple of fine lives together" (*TS* 257), since for Sterne digression in narrative acts as a palliative against the separation of mere representation and life itself. In view of the *ab Ovo* connection between biographical life and biological life, Keenleyside's interpretation of Locke will further help us to place emphasis not on "a couple of fine lives," separated, but "fine lives together" (132). I want to expand this claim by asking, in addition to the 'how' of Sterne's critique of Locke, about the 'where' of its power and resistance.

The contours of *Tristram Shandy*'s satire are attributed to what Sterne reads in Locke as the overdetermination of property to account for life as separated from anything that isn't itself. Also known as "possessive individualism" (Macpherson 3), Locke provides that property is life, liberty, and estate as conferred on the individual by nature; specifically, whatever in nature a person "hath mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is his own" becomes their property (11). As such, Locke's theory of property has a rather loose definition which Sterne parodies by making of the scene a palimpsest featuring Walter. "He pick'd up an opinion," Tristram says of his father, "…as a man in a state of nature picks up an apple.—It becomes his own,—and if he is a man of spirit, he would lose his life rather than give it up" (Sterne, *TS* 200). Keenleyside calls this "picking-up model of personhood" one that equates natural property in the apple to an otherwise cognitive feature in the opinion; a mere composite, people come to be "picked up and put together like bits of matter" (118-119). The problem with separating life into bits of matter, for Sterne, is that it reduces the complex expression of the living body to a series of associations.[16] Whereas Locke's passage in *Second Treatise* asks at what point the apple a person picks from a tree becomes their property (hint: right away), Sterne's takes it to the other extreme: "the thing pick'd up, carried home, roasted, peel'd, eaten, digested and so on;——'tis evident that the gatherer of the apple, in so doing, has mix'd something which was his own, with the apple which was not his own, by which means he has acquired a property" (200). Tristram is somewhat unsure about the Lockean notion that anything mixed into "something which was his

[16] Critics have long debated the role of Locke's "association of ideas" in *Tristram Shandy.* As an empiricist, Locke maintains that "ideas become connected on the basis of experience" (Tabb 77). The most abiding application of Locke's theory—much like Tristram's digressive narration, that cognition makes experience into 'trains of ideas'—has met scrutiny as early as Banerjee's 1974 article (694). Indeed, Banerjee notes that for all the consequences a train of ideas has on our understanding of Sterne's novel, including conceptualizations of succession and duration, it neither appears in Locke nor would be relevant in Sterne's readings of Locke. In a typical interpretation, Briggs more recently looks to the separation of mind and body which appears to characterize Tristram's "expressive powers" and "continual sensitivity to the 'accidents' which intervene between the mind and its object" (499).

own" (i.e., the body) becomes his property. The deflationary humor characteristic of Sterne's satire of logical reasoning necessitates that he reverse Locke's original, utilitarian ordering—digested, eaten, boiled, brought home—and end instead with bodily functions befitting scatological humor: digestion "and so on" (see Keenleyside 120). Wryly, then, Tristram explains that his father could just as easily pick up and property all types of opinions as if a line of fortifications without communication to the outside world. It bears repeating that this irony betrays a serious concern: "Walter's Locke [construes] all relations as the effects of association or dissolution, of the addition or subtraction of separate or separable parts" (Keenleyside 122), making it so that biography/consciousness is made to be different than biology/the body. For Sterne and Tristram the problem is not that the "picking-up model" of personhood coopts nature, even though it is rather simple for the "exsudations" (200) or oozings of Walter's brain to appropriate anything in reach. On the contrary, it is to show the person who is simply made up of or analyzed into different parts represents the Enlightenment progress of English government to develop its polity according to popularly Robinocratic values, which were also Lockean values.

In other words: a literal definition of body politic as an "association of persons" (*OED*, n.3). What Locke most famously argues in his *Second Treatise* turns out to be an augmented version of the principle of separable life found in our discussion of property. Social contract theory states that lack of authority in the state of nature will lead individual persons to "enter into one community, and make one body politic" (7-8). But Locke is perhaps selective to call the virtual replacement of nature for government an act of collective embodiment, when he also says entering into one community requires attendant institutions such as law; it is "unreasonable for men to be judges in their own cases" (7) in a state of nature, so the contract provides them a judiciary. This is why McKeon interprets the theory in an opposite way: although individuals

come together and make one body politic, social contract institutions are made from collective *dis*embodiment or detachment ("Secret History" 12). Sterne once again uses Walter to express the dangers of separation. Now, the focus comes upon the metropolis as a hub of British commerce, government, and institutions—as well as the fulfillment of British body politic. By the middle of the eighteenth century, it would have been commonplace to say, as Walter does, that the "current of men and money towards the metropolis" (*TS* 43) is tantamount to a malady of the body. But because Tristram filters commonplace through his father's casuistry (i.e., clever but unsound reasoning), we may see that his satirical critique of Locke is not an isolated event.

Walter's proposal to "remedy" the commercialized metropolis plays out the type of government that would follow the state of nature. "Was I an absolute prince," he begins,

> I would appoint able judges, at every avenue of the metropolis, who should take cognizance of every fool's business who came there; […] I shall take care, that my metropolis totter'd not thro' its own weight;—that the head be no longer too big for the body;---that the extreams, now wasted and pin'd in, be restored to their due share of nourishment, and regain, with it, their natural strength and beauty;--I would effectually provide, That the meadows and corn-fields, of my dominions, should laugh and sing;—that good chear and hospitality flourish once more; and that such weight and influence be put thereby into the hands of the Squirality of my kingdom. (43-44)

If Tristram described his father's casuistry, in the first instance, by pointing out the relative fruitlessness of property after it is excreted, here he does the same by overextending the definition of "body politic" to mean that of a person's body. As well, Walter's Lockean critique of absolute power—so far counterintuitive, if indeed he wishes to be an "absolute prince"—is another parody of associationist logic arising from the failure of government to care only for its citizens' disembodied, collective health. Let alone model of personhood (Keenleyside 124), Sterne reveals that there is something wrong with a form of government that promises its subjects "enter into one community" through their collective disembodiment at the hands of institutions such as obstetrics, which take hold of the body. This aspect of Sterne's critique is easy enough to understand, especially as he continues to borrow from Locke's *Second Treatise*.

It also functions as an inauspicious question: what developments in British biopolitics make it so that it is "unreasonable for men to be judges in their own cases" (Locke 7), but apparently reasonable to "appoint able judges, at every avenue" as if to check up on all "men"?

Accordingly, Sterne blends Locke's social contract theory of society and Robert Filmer's patriarchal theory of monarchy in order to create the political opinions unique to Walter Shandy. Little to no evidence demonstrates whether this representation of Filmer, a defender of the divine right of kings, derives from his critical portrayal in *Second Treatise* or Sterne's own readings.[17] In any case, I argue that Walter affirms both Locke's critique of Filmer *and* the desired features of Filmer's link between monarchy and paternal authority, all so that he may dictate the conditions of his pregnant wife's delivery. Just before proposing to remedy the metropolis, Walter remarks that he is not afraid of losing his freedom to French invasion (43). In eighteenth-century England, it would have been unsurprising to say that French monarchy made its citizens poor (New and New, *TS* 610), but the remark also shows that Walter believes such "ruinous and desolate" leadership (Sterne, *TS* 44) disincentivizes citizen participation in the collective health of the national body. Absolutism is not all it's cracked up to be: *Parliament* should ensure this body's health. Sterne lifts Walter's critique of absolute power from Locke, who rejects that the courtly monarch be the same as the household patriarch: were Filmer's doctrine true, writes Locke, "must not the child … never so much sovereign, be in subjection to his mother and nurse, to tutors and governors, till age and education brought him reason and ability to govern himself and others?" (21). At this point, Walter stops affirming Locke's critique. If he did not, then there would be logical reason to let Mrs. Shandy have a nurse/woman midwife deliver Tristram.

[17] In his article "The Fifth Commandment; Some Allusions to Sir Robert Filmer's Writings in *Tristram Shandy*" (1947), Wilfred Watson argues that much of Filmer's writing is "preserved" in Locke's *Second Treatise*. That said, it is not as necessary that we know Sterne's source material as much as we see the context of his readings of Locke.

Tristram Shandy understands its place at the culmination of an obstetrical revolution. By the publication of Sterne's third volume, *A Treatise on the Theory And Practice Of Midwifery* (1760) had made the forceps a common, and often life-saving, instrument. But at the same time, English midwives "witnessed their unquestioned monopoly over childbirth reversed … in the face of ardent propaganda in favor of the instrument-wielding man-midwife" (Blackwell 81). Alas, Walter not only hires one such man-midwife to deliver Tristram but also reinvigorates obstetrics with paternal power: "Another political reason which prompted my father so strongly to guard against the least evil accident in my mother's lying-in in the country,——was, That any such instance would infallibly throw a balance of power, too great already, into the weaker vessels of the gentry" (*TS* 44). Why man-midwifery should also solve for the "degenerating" (44) mixture of paternal power and government reminds us of the metropolis. The emerging field of obstetrics mitigates against infant death, but it also seems that for Walter it will prevent women, the "weaker vessels," from making a mistake that would lead to an "evil accident." He requires a government stronger than France and a body stronger than a woman's: Walter must father a perfectly proportioned metropolis. To improve the inadequacy of absolute power to care for its citizens, Walter invokes Locke's emphasis on the health of a collective body; to improve the inadequacy of absolute power to be sufficiently paternal, he invokes Filmer's emphasis on extending sovereign power to the home. The final result is thus conditional: "Was I an absolute prince," that is, if Walter could make the best kingdom, he would make it akin to a person's readily pliable body "restored to [its] due share of nourishment, and … natural strength and beauty" as maintained by the probability of obstetric technology to reduce accidents. Of course, men need not be judges in their own cases as they are in a state of nature. Now, there are "judges, at every avenue"; and not just judges, but adjudicators such as man-midwives to send

countryside residents home (43) who dare like Mrs. Shandy hire a woman midwife. Using an odd blend of Locke and Filmer, Sterne questions a form of government made up of separate parts. According to Keenleyside, he also "cautions that there is something unsustainable about a society that sees nothing special about life" (124). We as readers are invited to think the kind of society that fails to validate life's organic complexity adheres to a biopolitical paradigm.

As the subject is split from the sovereign prince, the foregoing concern about separating first-person consciousness from the living body is cast into the mold of government. Tristram resurrects an unfashionable political theorist in Filmer—or at least, Locke's Filmer—to expose the ease with which Walter literally conceives of British biopolitics, which no longer needs the connection between the subject's body and the sovereign's body. The order of discourse is functionally inverted: individuals cannot "make one body politic" (Locke 7-8) if the condition of their inclusion is depersonalization, separation, and even categorization (e.g., man-midwife over midwife). Rather, the sovereign will usher in individuals "at that point of connection where nature, in the sense of physical elements, interferes with nature in the sense of the nature of the human species" (Foucault, *STP* 23). A commercialized metropolis is an exemplary geography where sovereign power is still manifest in biopower, where the prince presides but has limited control (compared to life-saving institutions) over a population of individuals. This is the most precise basis for Sterne's critique of Locke. McKeon writes, "The separation of subject from sovereign is like the separation of the knowing subject from the object of knowledge because it involves an experience of detachment, an awareness of oneself as a singular entity" ("Secret History" 12). I cannot believe Shandeism stands only for what scholars argue to be an emerging self-consciousness without also accounting for knowledge as a function of England's state power. When men began to control the world of birth, reproduction became an "objective

reference point" that allowed Britain to build knowledge about bodies, plants, and demographics (Cody 23). Hence the narrative's parodic return to *ab Ovo* storytelling warns us of encroaching institutions that apprehend the body from the moment of its conception into such a world. Through a thick lens of irony, it is possible to see that the affinity of body of work and bodies of characters is a complex expression of resistance against their objectification as knowledge.

Invariably, rendering or reading the body in *Tristram Shandy* is difficult (see McMaster 25). There is a fascinating description near the end of Volume I which reflects this frustration, as well as the apparent reason for Walter's singular notions. Tristram suddenly digresses about the ancient Greek god Momus, who had satirically reproached Hephaestus for not creating a glass window in humans' chests that would betray their secrets (New and New, *TS* 616). He names several foolish oversights of Momus's glass, averring most importantly that human bodies "are wrapt here in a dark covering of uncrystallized flesh and blood; so that if we would come to specific characters of them, we must go some other way to work" (65-66). Too often, Tristram postulates, do writers think themselves capable of fully rendering characters—their personalities, actions, aspirations—without paying any rightful attention to the body's outline. One cannot presume to "[view] the soul stark naked;---[observe] all her motions,—her machinations" (65), for capturing a character's nature more exactly requires "a master-stroke of digressive skill" (63).

It is only intuitive that Sterne's digressions should be something of an individualistic response to novels by Richardson or Fielding, and that they therefore reinforce the Lockean model of mind that dominated the Georgian century (Porter 70).[18] But we have seen that this interpretation falls under scrutiny whenever our narrator mentions the body (which is remarkably often). In *OT*, before he conceptualized a 'biopolitics' of a mass of bodies, Foucault explained

[18] For an early example, see Cash 131; cf. Parker 209-211.

that historicity was "introduced into" nature when the living being became a privileged point of discovery, that is, when biology as opposed to taxonomy became the starting point of life (276). Throughout the course of the eighteenth century, the living being would form "the outline of an organic structure, which maintains uninterrupted relations with exterior elements that it utilizes (by breathing and eating) in order to maintain and develop its own structure" (273). I imagine Tristram's ostensibly nonchalant but consistently absorbed representation of the body's outline, particularly with regard to reproduction, puts forth the idea that a narrative's characters have lives that are impossible to register by usual means. This is a literal reason why Sterne is not invested in what Watt's formalist study attributed to the writings of his forebears as an unparalleled attempt to present "all the varieties of human experience" (11) through novelistic fiction. For an organic structure that marks its existence by continuities within a larger social schema is so complicated that Tristram must "go some other way to work" (*TS* 66). According to the Shandean paradigm, the only reasonable "way to work" is to experience the body's uncrystallized surface through digressions: "they are the life, the soul of reading;---take them out of this book for instance,--you might as well take the book along with them" (64). Perhaps Sterne thinks his contemporaries misguided for using a method akin to Momus's glass for writing characters. Digression, which reorganizes linear structure, is instead conceived as immanent to narrative representation. To circumvent the body's "dark covering," an author—if indeed they bear the burden of capturing human experience—must match narration to its nuanced curves.

That is why digression is more than a formal response to novelistic structures found in Richardson's or Fielding's work: it constitutes a discursive resistance to power relations developed by governmental conduct. Sterne's return to the moment of conception, in a style that is "digressive, and it is progressive too,—and at the same time" (64), takes time to redefine what

it means for power to have been "dispersed." He employs this term early on to ensure the narrative's continuation according to its sign: "*Pray, my dear*, quoth my mother, *have you not forgot to wind up the clock?* … it was a very unreasonable question at least,—because it scattered and dispersed the animal spirits" (6; 267). Thought to be the principal agent in neural connections, the intact animal spirit is both an assurance of the fetus's health as well as another exaggeration of Locke's belief that associations are built up arbitrarily (Hawley 485). The animal spirit is, finally, what Burton refers to in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* as "the instrument of the soul" (qtd. in McMaster 31), signifying in some way that were it to be dangerously dispersed, only digression—"the soul of reading" (*TS* 64)—would be able to restore its essence. Mrs. Shandy's interruption moreover recalls the far older theory of traducianism, which Hawley explains as a masculinist view of seminal propagation that "gave a child not just a body which physically resembled his father's, but a soul as well" (482). What these curious concurrences show is that Tristram earnestly tries to resist the patriarchal-governmental dissolution of his life. The best way he knows to resist is a kind of counter-conduct: that the body's circuitous outline is tantamount to the body of work's digressive structure serves to "activate something 'as inventive, as mobile, as productive' as power itself" (Davidson 27). Under the direction of Sterne's mordant prose, this immanent relation of power and life means pushing beyond the negative act of disobedience to a critique much more embedded in the text's "flesh and blood."

Walter's singular notions do not provide evidence to the contrary; indeed, Tristram foreshortens the ability of biopower or even readers to apprehend his narrative, specifically by playing up political casuistry. Laurent de Sutter argues that *Tristram Shandy*'s use of casuistry is not a critique of scholasticism, but "a way of describing the way in which the world functions according to its system" (233). To the eighteenth-century reader, the image of Walter as an

absolute ruler would be difficult to reconcile with a Georgian sovereign whose power was found more readily in Parliament or local institutions (Innes 28). No doubt Tristram's celebration of his father's pseudo-scientific syllogisms is a tongue-in-cheek admission that their veracity matters less than their proliferation in and determination of everyday life. For instance, although Momus's glass does not exist, the problem presents itself later on that Walter only "[places] things in his own light" (129); if only his wife's flesh were so crystallized, he could ascertain and even property the fetus in a more complete way than his status as *pater familias* accords him in the first place. Furthermore, the implications of Walter's Lockean belief that "[k]nowledge, like matter … [is] divisible *in infinitum*" (129) are incompatible with the digressive structure of the body, but he continues to call any deviation from his philosophy an error which undermines the foundation of politics. Tristram on several occasions clarifies why his father asks Elizabeth Shandy to use the man-midwife for delivery, often appealing to an empirical philosophy which at best is speculative. He writes, "The laws of nature will defend themselves;—but error—(he [Walter] would add, looking earnestly at my mother)—error, Sir, creeps in thro' the minute-holes, and small crevices, which human nature leaves unguarded" (130). Because childbirth at this time was left to the mother's discretion (Cody 34), Elizabeth need not avail herself of her husband's natural philosophy. Yet, Walter's scientific distrust of women's subjective feeling allows him to think that probabilistic error creeps in through their vaginas, which seem to him indefensible both in rhetorical argument and practice to protect the yet unborn child.

Particularly, what these patriarchal locutions amount to is not something for readers to comprehend; rather, we are encouraged to seek the fault line of their specious employment. Philosophical, political, and medical theories are brought together, rearranged, and even reattributed so that digression becomes an emplotting structure. That Tristram should be cursed

for the rest of his life by an interruption taking place before his life is the apparent condition for progression. Whereas McMaster remarks on the relation between mind and body established as the animal spirit "[takes] its own evolutionary path towards the beast in us" (56), it appears just as if not more poignant that Tristram emphasizes their scattering. By leveraging a view of the body that escapes Locke's *tabula rasa*, Sterne demonstrates that the dispersal of animal spirits outside their original container in the mind only increases their power to determine an individual's lifespace. This consistent return to conception most intuitively asks us to see how a simple interruption disperses the narrative's form and makes the body susceptible to outside influence. As a result, confronting such a 'regulatory discourse' with casuistry functions in a similar way to confronting the Lockean separation of life with a digressive narrative structure. To fight fire with fire: this is likely what Sterne thought was required of a society where Parliament and ancillary institutions are concerned with the conditions of *life* for the wrong reasons. The maintenance of life at the most general level, or biopower, curiously enough begins in the family—the same informal institution that Parliament used to ensure the infant's health.

2.1 The Medicalized Family

Whereas news reportage, penitentiary prisons, and the home are ideological instruments that demonstrate "the general good had to be embraced as an individual's own personal good" (Armstrong 99), the body points us first to how an individual had to become "a general objective of policy" (Foucault, *PK* 168). This simple inversion is consequential, if not for typical readings of bourgeois power and resistance in the early novel, then for my readings of conduct and counter-conduct in Sterne's novels. One example which features prominently in *Tristram Shandy* is what Foucault ascribes to biopolitics ("noso-politics" in the cited essay) as the "medicalisation

of the family" (172), or an emerging paradigm in Europe from the eighteenth century onward that prioritized the survival of children to adulthood. The main premise of Foucault's argument locates population-oriented health initiatives not in state apparatuses, but in power relations sustained at the level of the social body which, first of all, began with "the displacement of health problems to problems of assistance" (168; cf. Cody 18). Within the new set of problems introduced by populationism and exemplified by the Foundling Hospital, newborn bodies became a receptacle of care. The family "is no longer to be just a system of relations inscribed in a social status, a kinship system, a mechanism for the transmission of property. It is to become a dense, saturated, permanent, continuous physical environment which envelops, maintains and develops the child's body" (172-173). Following the mid-eighteenth-century, families made up an effective site where an individual's pedagogy in self-financing, health, longevity, and so forth coincided with a society's general aspiration to medicalization. No doubt the "Wish" that commences Tristram's novel-length exposé of his parents' inattention to sexual intercourse echoes a failure of the family, as such, to carry out their "bound" (*TS* 6) duty. The necessary consequence of the family's localized care *and* continuous relationship with a general biopolitics of well-being is that Tristram is vulnerable to misfortunes just as extensive: "I tremble to think what a foundation had been laid for a thousand weaknesses both of body and mind" (7).

Thus conceptualized, the ongoing medicalization of the family in England gives a slightly different context to historicist interpretations of the early novel. Where a central objective of the most popular novelist before Sterne, Henry Fielding, was to limn "juridical practice" in order to make the new genre an authoritative resource (Bender 139), the later expansion of policing to address health leaves an open question about what novels did and should represent (Innes 140). As we have seen, such confrontations in Sterne are rarely if ever concerned with the explicit

exercise of law; rather, and paradoxically, they threaten to ensure the infant Tristram has a healthy body. It is an admittedly parochial point that asserts the individualistic technologies historicist critics attribute to the 'rise of the novel' do not apply to the Shandy family. If only as a least common denominator, though, between the negative implication that fiction controls the individual and the anodyne suggestion that it regulates them, I would like to recount more examples in *Tristram Shandy* of power's hold over life and the narrator's recourse to Shandeism.

As Foucault and historians such as Roy Porter and Nikolas Rose have shown, medicine assumed importance during the second half of the eighteenth century "at the point of intersection of a new, 'analytical' economy of assistance with the emergence of a general 'police' of health" (Foucault, *PK* 171). By "analytical economy" it is also meant the late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century emphasis on quantification, which assessed population growth and estimates. Oddly enough, medical men became interested in population data to the extent that Britain's growth signaled the social body's vigor (Innes 126). By 1760, when man-midwives virtually took over the field of obstetrics, the public and scholarly revival of so-called "political arithmetic" had culminated with an assessment of "happiness and pain across the social body" (112). At this time medical men and clergymen sought to define happiness as membership in the body politic, which even in a loose sense is ample precedent for Laurence Sterne to use fiction as a vehicle for the interrelation of medicine and emotion. The apparent difference between Sterne and predecessors who had also aestheticized medical discourses, like Tobias Smollett, will more specifically lie with the recourse to a satirical version of happiness as crack-brained laughter *as* a system of moral values against biopower. The medicalized family in *Tristram Shandy* is the first and predominant gesture toward professional medicine understood as source of regulation, otherwise further enabled and gendered by population theory and obstetrics (Cody 21). The

examination that follows pays particular attention to Sterne's representation of an ongoing "midwife debate" between midwives and man-midwives, not just as another object of ridicule but as a baseline for the novel's material resistance to regulatory institutions that apprehend life.

Sterne makes it clear as early as volume one which side of the midwife debate he is on. Before the eighteenth century, childbirth in England mostly remained a private affair between a mother and a female midwife licensed by the Anglican Church (Cody 34). Despite the fact that midwives' experiential knowledge was viewed in the public eye as matching the authority of doctors, male surgeons would attend to mothers whose reproductive complications apparently exceeded local competency. Gradually, in the period between the Glorious Revolution and mid-eighteenth century, when a number of influential publications about the forceps popularized man-midwifery, men trained in obstetrics and gynecology worked professionally to subvert midwives' widespread trust monopoly in delivery. Something of England's culture of politeness had to do with the ascension of men-midwives: Smellie's *Treatise* (likely ghostwritten by Smollett) not only detailed a new-and-improved forceps but also appealed to middle- and upper-class manners in its sympathetic portrayal of mothers (Cody 152-154). The midwife debate as a symbolic rivalry between experienced midwives and educated men-midwives diminishes the complexity of the role of birth at this time, yet in 1759 Sterne is working from its popular kernel to defend the former, "a thin, upright, motherly, notable, good old body of a midwife" (*TS* 12).

The midwife appears, in this light, as a nostrum for what Sterne perceives as the contemporary novel's generic stagnation: authors have generally failed to capture the complex expression and regulation of the body. Tristram's self-professed best chapter says as much against the "cold conceits" of fiction that strives only to tell a sententious or, indeed, ridiculous story without heed to the inner workings of a text (253). For the maundering style that all but

accounts for Sterne's inclusion into early novel studies is not haphazard (see De Voogd 281); a novelist's "distress, in this matter, is truely pitiable" if they cannot employ digressions as a structuring device, so that "digressive and progressive" movements keep the text going on its own. As if an organic mechanism, these movements make *Tristram*, the text, coherent with Tristram, the person (64). This is the background against which Sterne portrays the midwife, who, with the benefit of various formal affirmations, gains credibility over the novel's man-midwife Dr. Slop. In the same chapter she is introduced, Tristram begins a digression ranging in topic from hobby-horses to Yorick's death, and only later returns to her story: "It is so long since the reader of this rhapsodical work has been parted from the midwife, that it is high time to mention her again to him, merely to put him in mind that there is such a body still in the world" (33). Certainly Sterne's angle in employing digression early on could be to foreground his satire of the novel as a genre; Blackwell claims that Tristram and Yorick, "like Don Quixote, can make 'labour stand still' every time they shamble by a meaningful plot, diverting it from its course" (102). Such an ability, consistent with a tradition of learned wit satire, would seem to corroborate Spacks's argument that the Sternean narrator is invested in dominating "incontrollable facts" (134). Yet it should be remembered that *ab Ovo* storytelling adds to digression the more serious claim that literature exists in connection with regulatory mechanisms, such that the midwife's reappearance uses the body of text to let readers know that there is still "such a body" as hers.

Tristram envisions his narrative as enacting resistance on the midwife's behalf. Indeed, he does not "shamble by a meaningful plot" if his goal is to save the midwife from obscurity through a tactical affirmation of her experience and negation of Dr. Slop's expertise. It so happens that contemporary critics were more nettled by the novel's digressive style as opposed only to its plot. In a 1761 review of volumes three and four—when Sterne starts to amplify

scenes depicting medical neglect—Owen Ruffhead changes his mind about what potential he saw in the first two volumes: "Hast not thou, O Tristram! run over things holy, profane, clean, obscene, grave, and light, without regard to time, place, they *own person*" (437). In a common direction, I believe the merit of imagining narrator's ability to control his own narrative (to "make labor stand still" or "run over things") is that diversion can be a form of counter-conduct that wards off regulation. Under biopolitical paradigms of control, resistance expands to include the individual's action in non-exterior relation to government policies that conduct life. "[I]f resistance were nothing more than the reverse image of power, it wouldn't resist," Davidson writes (27); insofar as government and adjoining institutions create the field of actions from which subjects may feasibly choose, counter-conduct works within that same field to oppose power "and thereby affect, in a new way, the possibilities of action of others" (29). Whether Tristram sees the conducting power he faces as the novel's generic limits or society's tendency toward control of the social body (both, I think), his eccentric fictional autobiography tells a winding story that fears and so rejoins the medicalization symptomatic of biopower.

It is no wonder he chooses to make space for the midwife and, perhaps, to affect positively her range of actions: "[T]he poor woman should not be lost in the meantime;---because when she is wanted we can no way do without her" (*TS* 33). To initiate discussion about the midwife, then halt suddenly, and at last give her renewed attention is intended to open out the narrative body's possibilities. The midwife should not expire "in the meantime," that is, during Tristram's digressions, and in referring to her absence with respect to her body's presence Sterne wants us to consider what it means for midwifery to erode literally at the hands of medical men—and what it looks like for obstetric technology to stay. The narrator's pronouncement "to

do exact justice to every creature brought upon the stage of this dramatic work" (18) is grave, not least because some such creatures are in danger of no longer surviving the way they see fit.

In considering midwifery as so embodied in the text, we might wonder how Sterne's one-off literary representation pertains to regulation during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean take up a similar question in their materialist-feminist reading of contemporary obstetric discourse, stating that the midwife "seems both incidental and crucial" to Sterne's theory of the novel (522). For example, Tristram wryly embeds the midwife debate in a narrative structure that privileges its fair share of misogynistic and anxious remarks; he also and more concretely represents political squabble tracing back to the Glorious Revolution of either regulating midwives or promoting man-midwives. But Landry and MacLean move past the typical feminist reading of *Tristram Shandy* that finds merely a discursive reflection of the struggle between female vocation and male education. In spite of the book's homosocial element—particularly the divide between Elizabeth Shandy reproducing Tristram upstairs while men reproduce ideas downstairs—Sterne nevertheless constructs a satire sensitive to published debates on obstetrics. Male characters are "peculiarly embroiled within that discourse, even obsessed by" the fear of what could happen to the fetus without life-saving technology or proper care (535). Situated within a unique period during the eighteenth century, when midwives were phased out for man-midwives but when the latter's instruments were not yet perfected, Sterne's novel is a literary inflection point that represents male anxiety over birth and disfigurement.

Examining a local response to Smellie's *Treatise*, in which the malcontent recounts gruesome details from a long-overdue stillbirth, Landry and MacLean conclude that Tristram's own narrative is "an act of historical repression, a fictional warding off of unthinkably grotesque historical possibility" (537). There is a slight echo in the background of this argument, however,

that attaches historical points of resistance exclusively to satire; "grotesque" as it is deployed here recalls Mikhail Bakhtin's gloss of Rabelais, if indeed the political issues in which Sterne is interested are reducible to anatomy. With ample parallel to Shandeism, Bakhtin demonstrates of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (c. 1532-1564) laughter's centrality as "its own world versus the official world … its own state versus the official state" (88). And yet that which separates Sterne's utilization of laughter from purely satirical status, besides the fact that grotesque bodies take a backseat to more explicitly injured bodies, is found in the novel's perceived generic ability. In other words, Sterne exploits the affordances of a new genre to address questions of societal transformation during the mid-eighteenth century: what Landry and MacLean call a period of anxiety, what Porter deems an epistemological shift, and what my thesis reads as Enlightenment biopolitics, which I argue suitably distills the above sentiments into a concept of qualified life. *Tristram Shandy* is a reservoir of possible confrontations between government and life, showing with enough cheek that biopower must mediate one's "own world" and the "official world." Its general unfurling in the family unit or obstetrics cannot automatically reflect a grotesque body (as Momus's glass evidenced thoroughly), but rather influences a vulnerable body whose special recourse to laughter requires the novel as a sort of formal remedy.

No doubt obstetrics looms large at the center of a family drama of how best to prevent perinatal mortality. Elizabeth had requested the unnamed midwife to help deliver Tristram, but Walter characteristically insists that a man-midwife with the newest obstetric technology attend the birth. At one level, the novel's anxieties concentrate on a medicalized obsession with child and adult development. In Filmerian fashion the men at Shandy Hall who harbor such anxieties take the Catholic view of childbirth (while enjoying the privileges of Anglicanism) that the fetus's safety should be considered more important than the mother's. Several chapters which

provide Walter a platform for discussing erroneous medical theory are yet again casuistic: "[F]or a man to be master of one of the finest chains of reasoning in nature,—and have a wife at the same time with such a head-piece, that he cannot hang a single inference within side of it, to save his soul from destruction" (130). Previous work on misogyny in the novel is apt to analyze Sterne's most transgressive remarks as situated within a general ethos of impotence.[19] If we may also locate sex-based discrimination against Mrs. Shandy and the midwife as part of medicalization, both in medical science and philosophical "chains of reasoning," we are better equipped to understand regulation as a function of population health during the eighteenth century. For at another level, Sterne's representation of the child's survival to adulthood is muddled with medical casuistry that assigns responsibility to women (the "weaker vessels" [44]).

Walter Shandy is hard-pressed to deal with the possibility of his son's potential "destruction," and so requires a throng of philosophical-cum-religious ideas in opposition to his wife's wishes. He raises yet another Lockean concern about the forceps crushing Tristram's cerebellum (it instead crushes the nose, a favorite metaphor for the penis); asks Elizabeth to consider caesarean delivery (she turns "pale as ashes at the very mention of it" [135]); and even suggests baptism "via injection," invoking a Catholic tradition of performing the sacrament on a dying infant in utero (Cody 40). As always with Sterne, a satire of the faculty of logical reasoning runs in reverse and improper direction. A repeated anxiety that the woman's womb is unfit to protect the fetus leads, for Walter, to a benign resolution: baptize "all the HOMUNCULI," or sperm, by injection before they reach the egg. "That the thing can be done,

[19] The female reader of *Tristram Shandy* occupies a contested role. On the one hand, Tristram consistently applauds "Sir" as sentimental and chastises "Madam" as prurient; Barbara Benedict contends that "Madam exemplifies the thrusting of 'private' matters into public … Her rhetorical style and function is [a] mere reflection" of the Shandy men (498). On the other hand, Sterne's satire of casuists like Mr. Shandy and Dr. Slop demonstrates his recognition of oppressive developments in obstetrics; through its formal interruptions, writes Blackwell, "the novel sets about noisily to compensate for Elizabeth Shandy's silences" (102). For impotence in the novel, see Loscocco 168-169.

which Mr. *Shandy* apprehends it may, *par le moyen d'une* petite canulle, and, *sans faire aucun tort la pere*." ("by means of a 'little injection pipe,' and, if it can be done without harm to the father"; 56). Tristram's intellectual snook at contemporary religious debates invites a reading of the fetal body as inflected by Walter's masculinization of childbirth. According to McMaster, what distinguishes this treatment of an otherwise widespread link during the eighteenth century between "male creativity" and "female procreativity" is that Sterne uses literature to represent Walter's ideas at the same time as Elizabeth actually gives birth to Tristram (40). Who should suggest to Walter that it is preferable that he somehow give birth to Tristram but one Dr. Slop; the inclusion of man-midwifery to a discussion of birth highlights Sterne's preoccupation with the body. Improved, but also subjected, the body of text divulges a story about qualified life.

For Sterne is just as explicit in his disfavor of the ilk of medical men whom Dr. Slop represents as he was with his support for the midwife. As a historical figure, Slop is an amalgamation of several disparate ideas in obstetric theory and so is depicted without "simple allusion to anybody" (Landry and MacLean 537). After Tristram unflatteringly introduces the doctor falling in mud en route to Shandy Hall, "What could Dr. *Slop* do?---He cross'd himself ✝——Pugh!----but the Doctor, Sir, was a Papist" (94). Hence his advice to Walter throughout the early volumes to prioritize the fetus's safety renders an explicitly Catholic viewpoint: that Tristram should be christened before he is born, and that it is preferable to invade the mother lest she be responsible for his premature death. Slop is also supposedly based on real-life physician John Burton, which explains the Jacobite associations embedded in such a "Papist" fold. That being the case, Landry and MacLean connect Slop's Catholicism to an "obstetrical-political site of controversy" during the Glorious Revolution in James II and Mary of Modena's warming-pan infant (538; cf. Cody 47-48). Hugh Chamberlen, of the family famous for introducing the forceps

into England and delivering royalty for generations, did not attend the birth of the dismal king's child. With the legitimacy of the newborn in question—opponents of Catholic succession warned that a fake heir was brought in a warming pan—obstetrics came to be a vital aspect of sovereign politics. Polemicists were quick to portray William and Mary's accession as what Tony Claydon calls "a breach of fundamental law" (163), signaling, as I argued in the introduction, the relevance of power-knowledge to the development of biopower following the Glorious Revolution. That obstetrics should be implicated in a fundamental split in power reminds us of the more local 'scattering' of animal spirits that is to determine Tristram's life. Dr. Slop's historical and parodied role in the narrative bears out what Sterne sees as the deleterious consequences of obstetrics as a direct function of biopolitical forms of life dating back to 1688.

The scene in which Slop is introduced as a 'tainted' medical man falling in mud further corroborates his status as a character based upon a variety of sources: as it concerns literature, Sterne employs a juxtaposition of learned wit characterization and contemporary novelistic tropes. Keymer attests that critics often view Slop's fall from his high horse as evidence for the novel's Cervantic inheritance. But there is more, of course, as Sterne draws on literary representations found in novels at least twenty years prior to the publication of volume one of *Tristram Shandy*. In juxtaposing the comedy of Cervantic description with stock rhetoric from novels (well known or not), "Sterne could present *Tristram Shandy* as doing to the 'new species of writing' what Don Quixote had done to romance, which was to test, explore, and satirize its working assumptions" (Keymer 33-34). If there are clear factors surrounding Sterne's satirical representation of Slop, an attendant question remains about how the text resists man-midwifery.

With Keymer, critics including Sterne's foremost editor in Melvyn New are inclined to locate irony, casuistry, or even plagiarism of a voluminous catalogue of source material and trace

its Shandean-type transformation in the text. For them, Slop's scene amounts to a linguistic game saddling different literary traditions; when Tristram describes Slop as "*unwiped*, *unappointed*, *unannealed*, with all his stains and blotches on him," New and New note that Sterne takes a page from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by altering "disappointed" to "unappointed" in a way that demonstrates "the midwife, not Dr. Slop, has the position of trust with regard to the delivery" (*TS* 626-627). Others critics such as Davis, Bender, and Armstrong help us to situate the favored tools of Sterne's repertoire within a mid-century milieu that is constantly in flux. The fact that new historicist criticism of the early novel has often overlooked his oeuvre, though, leaves a space where a more robust conceptualization of regulation belongs. Dr. Slop is well-situated to fill this gap. In a masterful digression, Tristram asks the reader to imagine what probably happened in the story after a sullied Slop walks in. Forgoing narration enables Tristram literally to stop the man-midwife: "Truce!—truce, good Dr. *Slop!*—stay thy obstetrick hand;—return it safe into thy bosom to keep it warm;—little do'st thou know what obstacles;—little dost thou think what hidden causes, retard its operation!" (97). The operative expression, "retard its operation," generally implies the inefficacy of new obstetric technology, and it is also the case for Sterne that medical men do not understand the complications posed to birth by accidents. A related passage five volumes later also removes part of the narrative to expose Slop's ineptitude:

> Doctor *Slop*, like a son of a w——, as my father called him for it,—to exalt himself,—debased me to death,—and made ten thousand times more of *Susannah*'s accident, than there was any grounds for; so that in a week's time, or less, it was in every body's mouth, *That poor Master Shandy* * * *

Sterne likely borrows the technique by which asterisks replace narration from Swift's "lacunae" in *A Tale of the Tub* (New and New, *TS* 684), creating a comic effect that allows the reader to imagine something profane whether or not it is the narrator's intention. As is the case when Tristram wants us to "go into" the next-door house in the empty pages provided by chapters eighteen and nineteen of volume nine (565-566), Sterne gives great respect to the reader's subjective interpretation while also reveling in the idea that critics will never be able to apprehend the text. For one thing, Dr. Slop debases Tristram "to death" but also spreads rumors around the neighborhood about the gruesome window-circumcision, the content of which we can only infer to be defamatory. There is also the matter of what *Tristram Shandy* as a seriocomic rumination on life plans to do with lacunae, since on the serious side of things Tristram admits that were it not for the woes and melancholy caused by Slop's blabber the world would be "jovial and … merry" (390). For Sterne, a gap in the text is like a hole in the body: something has marred its aspiration to "natural sweetness" (Aristotle qtd. in Agamben, "Homo Sacer" 13).

To be sure, the novel is an apposite genre for feeling out a transformation in power obstetrical or otherwise during the eighteenth century. If it functioned only according to what Foucault calls the disciplinary grid of sovereignty, or as Bender appends the genre's "fictional construction" (36), then we wouldn't see Sterne take the liberties with novel-writing that he does at the same time as he soaks the narrative in anxiety about life's regulation. Rather than an enclosed structure, *Tristram Shandy* presents the Shandy family as evidence that the novel is continuous with its environment; the apertures created as Tristram strews asterisks across the page reveal his earnest tendency to undermine Dr. Slop's authority *and* to demonstrate a connection between life and government. Accordingly, the role of the family to link individual care and a healthy social body "enables a 'private' ethic of good health as the reciprocal duty of

parents and children to be articulated on to a collective system of hygiene and scientific technique of cure … by a professional corps of doctors qualified and, as it were, recommended by the State" (Foucault, *PK* 174). Male obstetric students—as Slop surely once was—gained qualification from lectures in the professional setting of a university hall (Blackwell 82); what is more, the overflow of qualified man-midwives in London pushed several students to the provinces. Smellie in particular required his students to practice outside of London but retained the customs of English capital (Cody 163-164), indicating that the dissemination of enlightened knowledge had a distinct place in birth procedures at this time. Tristram's entrée into the complex web of obstetric discourse is found in a style and form that is just as entangled.

2.2 Style and Society

Digression and expurgation are the major tactics employed by Tristram to wish away woeful authority. The family drama incorporating such colorful characters as Mr. Shandy and Dr. Slop is surely a satire of knowledge folded into a satire of the novel-form; but the narrator's concerns, if not haphazard, have disclosed "hidden" determinants of life that are powerful. Nowhere else is their characterization and these social determinants on so full display as when Trim, sidekick to Tristram's uncle, gives a sermon on good conscience (Hebrews 13:18) to the company of men at Shandy Hall. In the same manner that the reflection on wit and judgement in the belated "Author's Preface" signals the relevance of ill-health, the novel's lone sermon points to an unnerving question about "the true springs and motives which, *in general*, have governed the actions of … life" (*TS* 110, my italics). Having stopped several times to debate trusted and distrusted consciences in the context of religious sects, Walter asks Trim to continue the sermon. But Trim starts to reflect on his brother who had migrated to Lisbon, when one night he was

captured and confined as part of the Spanish Inquisition (where he still remains): "I fear, an' please your Honours, all this [the content of the sermon] is in *Portugal*, where my poor brother *Tom* is" (123). "'Tis only a description, honest man," Dr. Slop replies, without the tact to recognize that for Trim and Sterne description belies the real possibility of torture. The tacit equation of the sermon to simultaneous and harrowing events in Lisbon brings us closer to the type of work Sterne thinks novels can do as an aesthetic response-mechanism to social plights.

For as loud as Sterne's satire many times is, we should not therefore conclude that his writings were silent on relevant social issues. Consider the sermon in *Tristram Shandy* alongside *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (1760), which until recently was thought to be a side project of the author's that reflected commonplace Anglicanism. Melvyn New published the definitive edition in 1996, and apparently provided the definitive viewpoint; Tim Parnell writes, "If sometimes grudgingly, most commentators now accept New's argument that the Sterne of the sermons is an orthodox Church-of-England man" (69). The argument rests in part on an idea that Sterne's characteristic 'voice' rarely emerges. Yet interestingly, Hawley took issue with this analysis of voice as Sterne's (rare) biographical revelations instead of Yorick's sentimental aesthetics.[20] She suggests we look at how Yorick "recaptures the unspeakable, particularly the acknowledgement of suffering, for the realm of social discourse" (Hawley 496). Sterne's satire does not tell the whole story: *Sermons* is a repository of voice and suppression in mid-century England. In the sermon on "Job's Account of the Shortness and Troubles of Life, considered," Yorick sets out to interpret the Biblical story of Job in terms of tragic events that either cut life short or prolong its suffering. He calls for a "close survey of human life … stript of every thing that can palliate or

[20] Yorick, like Tristram, is another of Sterne's ill alter egos. In name, He is the author of *Sermons*, *A Sentimental* Journey, and *Journal to Eliza*. Elizabeth K. Goodhue explains that "Sterne is and is not Yorick at once. And because of this, any number of Yoricks exist—as many Yoricks as there are readers responding to their calls for laughter and for sympathy" (76). Instead of employ digressions, Yorick rechannels what frustrations he has into sentiment.

gild over it" (97). Perhaps most interesting is that his rhetoric—to render a certain "scene" (101)—appeals to the reader's sociological imagination; the sermon limns a "downward" view at those suffering as a result of oppression and an 'upward' view at those suffering as a result of hubris. The former view echoes Trim's sorrow over his brother's continuous confinement.

Yorick takes us through the most violent sites of discipline and punishment: slavery, prisons, executions, mock-trials, and tortures, each the result of sovereign power. "Consider slavery——what it is, how bitter a draught, and how many millions have been made to drink of it … To conceive this, look into the history of the Romish church and her tyrants" (98-99). Sterne does not have the means to allow the enslaved person or prisoner to speak, but nor does he speak for them. The point is to express to a religious audience, all of whom are more than likely aware of English imperialism and colonialism, the importance of spatializing these scenes. By spatialize, I mean that Yorick removes the "gild" (97) of Anglocentric bias and speaks with aposiopetic expression as if to bracket off "slavery," for example, as a significant topic. Indeed, "by inserting his breathless dashes, he artfully lends his borrowed text an idiosyncratic air of spontaneity, and buttonholes his audience" (Hawley, "Pulpit" 86). I do not think explicit references to torture in *Tristram Shandy* or the *Sermons* undermine an argument for the biopolitical task of keeping a healthy population, frankly because they do not occur in England. Yet the sermons do present recent criticism that revises the concept of biopower to include 'necropower' (Mbembe). For Sterne, killing forces also reveal the determinants of social life.

At the end of his sermon on Job, he poses the question of what there is to gain from learning about the "dark sides" of human life especially if we have no means to help. "I answer," Sterne says, "that the subject is nevertheless of great importance, since it is necessary every creature should understand his present state and condition, to put him in mind of behaving

suitably to it" (103-104). Perhaps Sterne adheres to a commonplace aspiration to charity, but it is clear from the above example that the claim signifies more than mere platitude. In addition to digression, among the most memorable tools of counter-conduct at Sterne's disposal is the potential to expose different types of discourses. His texts must be evaluated for their socially embedded representations of the nexus at which knowledge and power live only to die.

Sterne, himself a frail body, understands the emergence of a power that bears on life. His attempts to resist the novel as a genre and biopolitics as an emerging form exploit literary conventions to a specific end: "Digressions, incontestably, are the sun-shine" (64). Hawley finds a connection between Sterne and Rabelais, both of whom "associate the health of the spirit with the state of the body" ("Englightenment knowledge" 42). Without drawing inspiration from the "grotesque" aspect of joy in Rabelais, Shandeism is much more particular about the sunshiny role of the text—no, the body of text—in retaining the spirit of Tristram's body lest it is sapped by the regulatory grid of sovereignty. At the end of volume four, Tristram provides formal proof that any learned-wit predilections pale in comparison to the serious and current issue of health:

> Was I left, like *Sancho Pança*, to choose my kingdom, it should not be maritime—or a kingdom of blacks to make a penny of;—no, it should be a kingdom of hearty laughing subjects: And as the bilious and more saturnine passions, by creating disorders in the blood and humours, have as bad an influence, I see, upon the body politick as body natural——and as nothing but a habit of virtue can fully govern those passions, and subject them to reason——I should add to my prayer—that God would give my subjects grace to be as WISE as they were MERRY; and then should I be the happiest monarch, and they are the happiest people under heaven. (303)

That Tristram implies a categorical difference between the comical context in which Cervantes's Sancho Panza would choose a kingdom and a more severe rumination about such a kingdom in the contemporary world establishes Shandeism as a unique process of thought. Moreover, the striking coincidence of this pronouncement with Walter's earlier claim, reflecting "Was I an absolute prince" (43), affords Tristram further distance from Lockean individualism toward a robust version of an ideal society sensitive to health and happiness. As passions build up in "the

body politick as body natural," Tristram is forced to reckon with a different set of problems than concerned his father on the same issue. Whereas Walter required a connection between body and state as part of a conceited plot to save the fetus from accidents, Tristram recognizes that solving for the guilty passions is not so easy. His wish is that the subjects of his kingdom be "as WISE as they [are] MERRY," which is to say that happiness is a more tenable solution to Parliamentary politics than judges at every avenue. Shandeism is more truly expressed as living a happy and healthy life in spite of prerogatives that have in mind a lifeless version of disembodied health.

It is by now unsurprising that the most unqualified expression present in *Tristram Shandy* should be proposed in opposition to the confinement of Trim's brother (see Figure 1). The famous flourish (*TS* 550) is an image typically used to inaugurate readers into the very individual mind of Sterne's eccentric narrator, notably compared to earlier novels of the period. But were we to neglect the context of its employment, as another aperture that makes the body of text resonant with reality, there would fail to be any import in reading the novel beyond its most interesting stylistic or spatial aspects. The scene following Trim's flourish, indeed, bears direct relation to the discussion in the *Sermons*. Having read the sermon on Job, former slave Ignatius Sancho wrote Sterne with the hope that the latter devote time to slavery in his writings; Sterne's style and fame, Sancho said, would "perhaps occasion a reformation throughout our Islands" (qtd. in Wehrs 174). In response, Sterne determined to "weave" the request into volume nine of *Tristram Shandy* (New and New, *TS* 726). The scene features a 'sympathetic' dialogue between Toby and Trim on whether "[a] Negro has a soul" (552). Trim asks Toby why the Black individual is enslaved if God gave all humans a soul. Neither man can furnish a possible reason, except, "cried the Corporal, shaking his head, because she has no one to stand up for her." Sterne to an extent fulfills Sancho's request, but we would do well to remember "the pleasures we take

in such representations" (*Sermons* 70) of the Other. This depiction would have appealed to readers' sympathies. By comparison, a modern reader should take issue with the manner in which Toby and Trim gaze at the enslaved person as "a pretty picture" (552), as a mere representation instead of embodied human. Part of the issue stems from the narratorial limits on voice: white men can speak (and cry), but the enslaved girl cannot. Moreover, it is not clear whether Tristram addresses widespread subjugation outside of this specific example, such as the colonialism implicit in Sancho's statement about "reformation throughout our Islands."

The point of introducing an analysis of race toward the end of this section is to recognize the limits of Foucault's original conceptualization of biopolitics. It is convenient enough to pick and choose scenes which best exhibit the quality of happiness required of Shandeism. Almost always, the proposed "kingdom of laughing subjects" and of embodied health is reserved to England's metropolitan population. The only exception in the novel is Tristram's claim that his kingdom would not exploit Black individuals, allowing everyone to be merry. It will remain my argument that Sterne's resistance to biopower and insistence on the body's expression refines our understanding of what exactly eighteenth-century novelists sought to do with a new genre. Neither the *Sermons* nor *Tristram Shandy* unseat the author's privilege, but both can be interpreted as contributing to the notion that life is a vital aspect of writing novels. Trim's flourish is an abiding instance of counter-conduct: it digresses with the narrative body, and is just as intricate as the power that seeks to apprehend it. The relationship of a medium like the novel to its social world is not dialectical; it is not either 'individual' *or* 'collective.' But with Sterne we do see, if not an engagement with the collective health of the population, then something akin to a necro-subjectivity which in the first place, through the process of death from the outside, is a process belying more than illness. It is a hubristic attempt to maintain life at a general level.

Coda: Shandeism

Sterne's corpse was interred on March 22, 1768, not three weeks after the publication of his final novel. Georgian pamphlets and, later, Victorian newspapers would spread scandalous rumors that his body was snatched in order that Cambridge anatomists could dissect it. In an attempt to lend credence to the story, Edmond Malone claimed in a manuscript that "a gentleman who was present at the dissection told me he recognized Sterne's face the moment he saw the body" (qtd. in Oakley 2). Whether or not these accounts are true, they suggest that Sterne's oeuvre enjoyed a rather embodied afterlife in popular representation. How uncanny, nonetheless, that the gentleman could identify Sterne *at once*, a claim which becomes less unfathomable when we take into consideration his instant celebrity in 1760 as "the most fashionable author in England" (Ross 11; Bosch 12). The Joshua Reynolds portrait (1760) that confirmed his popularity in England, and the Louis Carrogis Carmontelle portrait (c. 1762) that characterized his surprise to a hearty reception in France, both feature the mocking smile of a cleric whose irreverent wit (Ross 12) bespeaks a fecund intellectualism as much as it does a self-effacing knowledge. It was also this smile that masked (or in another interpretation, put on full display) the severe ill-health that plagued Sterne since his university days. If he had not missed his second sitting with Reynolds in 1768 due to increasingly poor health (Hughes 157), he might again have worn the same smile that his protagonists always seemed to don in the face of all trifles.

In fact, the collection of essays published on the occasion of Sterne's tercentenary was titled *Sterne, Tristram Yorick*, as if to suggest that within the claim to his singular physiognomy is a multiplicity. That Sterne pays close attention to a 'subjective turn' during the eighteenth century is not only endemic to Sterne studies but is also characteristic of the wholesale approach with which historians and literary critics have upheld or rejected the 'rise of the novel.' In

Keymer's view, *Tristram Shandy* is the primary representative of this subjective turn, "as the attempt of an ailing memoirist … to fix his identity in print before death intervenes" (in New, De Voogd, and Hawley, eds. 11). He concedes, however, that "Sterne's hapless narrator fails to articulate the simple, continuous selfhood he seeks." Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to show that the formal or social issues at stake in the novel are not reducible to individual identities, nor are they lacking of sufficient articulation. In response to new prerogatives of Parliament and emerging medical realities, Sterne deftly maneuvers the intoxication of a greater regulatory discourse on life and writes Tristram with enough verve to resist its power. The push-pull of "bio-power" is consistent throughout *Tristram Shandy*: such institutions as the family unit and obstetrics, which 'make' individuals live, elicit a mediated response in the text itself that highlights the possible merriment of life. The author's own beleaguered health is yet more telling about the social conditions which necessitate the Shandeistic dictum to laugh and live well.

It is truly Sterne's wish as he ends volume four that his "vile cough" doesn't kill him; if not, he promises to tell "a story to the world you little dream of" (304). His and Tristram's tendency to moralize is overridden by an effusive wish that the reader be merry against that world, whence state-sponsored institutions turn bodies into objects of knowledge (see Foucault, *DP* 28). This is one formulation; if my application of Foucault is misguided, and in fact the sovereignty-governmentality paradigm leaves out, as Roberto Esposito has argued, "the institution of sovereign power that acts to protect, or better immunize, the community from a threatened return to conflict" (Campbell qtd. in Esposito xii), then the argument for Sterne's body of resistance only becomes stronger. That Tristram requires his hypothetical subjects be wise and merry is an autoimmune reaction. Particularly, the immunitarian aporia whereby Sterne's vile cough exists at the same time as his prescription to live need suggest not only his

attention to a shift in forms of power, but also that narratorial immunity is the protection of, the reclamation of, individual life under late mercantilism and commercialism. Esposito argues that the immune system of modernity becomes so strong as to attack itself, and in that way Tristram is not derelict; his opinions will be his death (*TS* 257), only insofar as their digressions prolong it. In volume one, he is confident that he will publish "two volumes of my life every year;---- which, if I am suffered to go on quietly, and can make a tolerable bargain with my bookseller, I shall continue to do as long as I live" (35). It is interesting to consider an oeuvre so vital as to coterminate with its author; if one could infinitely progress and digress there would be no death, and as Sterne maintains, such a writer is more morally perfect for presenting profundities in details seemingly disparate to plot. Just as the *Sermons* endeavor to capture the unspeakable, Tristram's narration is "a way for the individual to open up to what is threatening to him or her in order to alleviate the grip that one's own self-protection has over the individual: as a way of protecting oneself from too much protection" (Lemm 6). There are so many hints that the proliferation of opinions and medical discourses is indeed the source of Tristram's doom.

"Shandeism" is a notion of life that brings the body and the body of text together. It is born out of illness, and it claims to recover the victim with great enthrallment. Sterne writes the following about the vital and textual aspects of Shandeism in a letter to David Garrick: "[W]as it not for some sudden starts and dashes—of Shandeism, which now and then either breaks the thread, or entangles it so, that the devil himself would be puzzled in winding it off—I should die a martyr—this by the way I never will——" (*Letters* 242; 1762). The eccentric breaks in Sterne's prose, both structural digression or stylistic aposiopesis, are a rather pointed declaration that writing is life. Sterne cannot help but refer to Shandeism above without the same dashes that marked *Tristram Shandy*'s narrative. Tristram's further prescription to live well depends on an

interpretation of the body as similarly constituted. In the first place, Shandeism is a fictional contruction that has been demonstrated to derive from bodily health in much the same way that Pantagruelism signaled for Rabelais a sort of joy; that Sterne moreover uses it as a nostrum in real-life correspondences intimates to readers the author's belief in prolonging life through "sudden starts and dashes." The odd phrase found in volume four is clear under this framework: "this self-same life of mine" (257) is the crystallization of biographical and biological life. Digression in the narrative and in life is supposed by Sterne to protect him from dying "a martyr"; despite the moralistic tradition by which Shandeism seems to be inspired, Sterne has divulged the greater consequence of bodily expression. For what reason should bodily expression be significant but its antipode in regulation. "[A]fter all," Sterne writes in another letter dated Janurary 1760, "I fear Tristram Shandy must go into the world with a hundred faults—if he is so happy as to have some striking beauties, merciful & good Judges will spare it" (*Letters* 84-85). The predestined misfortunes and weaknesses of body Tristram must enter the world with are gradually absorbed throughout his narrative into obscure knotting, apertures, and waypoints under the guise of ribald humor, idiosyncratic typography, plagiarism, and so forth. What we have found beneath is Tristram's anxious fear about the regulation of his body and body of text.

Tristram Shandy is about the generativity of a being, with a body, being pushed or driven to capacity. The term that is discussed here and so heavily and imported by Sterne makes only one appearance in the novel, just before Tristram references his vile cough: "True *Shandeism*, think what you will against it, opens the heart and lungs, and like all those affections which partake of its nature, it forces the blood and other vital fluids of the body to run freely through its channels, makes the wheel of life run long and cheerfully round." The "cheerful" or merry component of Shandeism provides the connection to an ethical philosophy that parses through a

newly enlightened social landscape bent on political progress, which necessarily requires healthy bodies. The analogous and immanent relation between life and government, and conduct and counter-conduct situates *Tristram Shandy* within a well-measured tradition of early novel criticism that has attempted to explain control and will-formation, though in starker terms than I imagine power to actually function in everyday life. And as much as Sterne scholars, correspondingly, interpret Tristram's subjectivity in terms of philosophical individualism, cultural politeness, and economic commercialism the broader claim to control still remains. In between these schemes, the common set of mid-eighteenth-century social issues that Sterne and the 'later' Foucault work on locate power-knowledge relations more broadly and in more anodyne terms. As that is what biopower tends to enshrine: a complicity that does not look like complicity, because the associated institutions respect and care for the body. The most effective satire of a philosopher like Walter and a doctor like Slop is to obviate their utility.

When Tristram flees from Death at the novel's end, there is little evidence that his conceptualization of life has changed (see 444). For in volume nine, he returns easily to life: "[I]n these sportive plains, and under this genial sun, where at this instant all flesh is running out piping, fiddling, and dancing," Tristram takes a last stand against "*straight lines*" (489). The phrase must be italicized, unless we should forget that it is a sin to read unexpressive stories with unrendered bodies. As a formal technique, Shandeism is posited in opposition to the novel as a genre. What I have regarded as the serious aspects of Sterne's otherwise jocular enterprise reflect what he views as the negative outcome of a biopolitical society. This thesis has argued that in comparison to contemporary authors, Sterne sought "a different way of approaching the notion of life" (Foucault, *AME* 477). Such a claim requires further exploration, but there should now be little doubt that Sterne's blithe resistance constitutes an affirmation of a body (of work).

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